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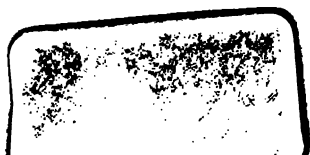
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SOLOMON SEESAW.



SOLOMON SEESAW.

BY

J. P. ROBERTSON,

SENIOR AUTHOR OF

LETTERS ON PARAGUAY



WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY PHIZ.

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SOLOMON SEESAW.

CHAPTER I.

The old Gentleman takes an interest greater than heretofore in Solomon, and thence gives rise to various charitable reflections, and sanguine anticipations on the part of Mr. Macmunny—These are revealed to the Reader in a soliloquy and a dialogue.

THE name of the old gentleman has not yet been mentioned, though it was of course known to Mr. Macmunny, by his friend's letter of introduction.

But as he is sufficiently distinguished from other characters in this history by the designation under which he has hitherto gone, and as the short memoir to be hereafter given of him was only obtained upon Solomon's word of

honour that the name should not be revealed, he shall be called, as heretofore, "the old gentleman."

All that was known by Mr. Macmunny of him was, that he had been in the army, but that, never having liked it, he sold out before attaining that enviable rank, one which, even when a brevet, would have dubbed him Captain for ever.

Mr. Macmunny's father knew that the old gentleman was come of a good family; that he had a fortune and estate at his own disposal; that he had met with some crosses in love; that he had been, in early life, what is termed gay; that he was making the tour of Scotland; and, finally, that he was not only an old gentleman, but an old bachelor.

That he was a man of talent, education and address, was evident, long before the conclusion of a first interview with him. His manners, were subdued and mild, although sometimes there was betrayed in them, and ratified by

an obvious change in the expression of his countenance, a combined exhibition of discontent and disappointment, rather than of positive unhappiness.

The old gentleman was not a cynic; but he was a good deal weaned from the world. He was no misanthrope: on the contrary, his conduct to Solomon has shown that he had latent susceptibilities of kindness and philanthropy, capable of being called into active operation; and that, whatever disappointments he might have met with, there was still in his heart a place for friendship.

He was now about to bid adieu to Mr. Macmunny and to Solomon; and, before doing so, he called on the former gentleman, and thus addressed him.

"I feel exceedingly obliged to you, Mr. Macmunny, for the favour which you have done in the matter of the exchange between Solomon and Mr. Keenyin; and I am not less glad to

see the kindness, I might say the distinction, with which you treat my protégé."

Mr. Macmunny bowed, and answered, "O, dinna' say ony thing o' that."

The old gentleman proceeded: "Protégé, I call him; for as long as he behaves properly, and I live, he shall never want a friend.

"But my friendship must be entirely contingent on his own good or bad conduct. I have every hope of the youth's success in life; for, from what I have seen, he is shrewd, observing, enterprising, and not wanting in affection.

"In better hands than yours, Mr. Macmunny for the drawing out of these faculties, and the making of them applicable to the affairs and business of the world, Solomon could not be. If, to the favours and civilities you have already conferred on me, you will add the kindness of sending me a half-yearly report, however laconic, of Solomon's conduct, I shall feel much obliged indeed."

"By a' manner o' means," said Mr. Mac-

munny; "it's naething mair than ye're entitled to; an' I'm sure I wish, wi' a' my heart, that Solomon may prove 'himsel' worthy o' sae gude a frien'."

Here the old gentleman, thanking the merchant, drew from his pocket two drafts, one for 50*l.* and the other for 100*l.*

"This draft for 50*l.*," said he, handing it to Mr. Macmunny, "is for that part of Solomon's salary which I have promised to pay. With the 50*l.* additional, which he is to receive from you, I think it should suffice, at least for the first year, and till we see how he inclines to spend it.

"But," continued the old gentleman, "here is another draft for 100*l.*, to be used *as a reserve fund*; and if you find that Solomon's expenses, even should they exceed the 100*l.* a-year, are of a refined nature,—such, for instance, as the purchase of books, keeping himself well dressed, enabling him to associate with young men of a better class of

society than the mere routine clerks of Glasgow; if you find this, and that he does not indulge in dissipation, why you may give him, in such portions and in such manner as you please, this other hundred pounds, too."

Mr Macmunny rather shook his head; but said he should certainly comply with the old gentleman's request. At the same time he determined, in his own mind, that even if he found Solomon willing to spend the "*reserve-fund*" in the most unexceptionable way, he should certainly not have more than the half of it the first year.

"To launch young men into the warl' wi' expensive habits," said Mr. Macmunny to himself, "is sure to lay up in store for them bankruptcy before they're auld anes."

The old gentleman now bade Mr. Macmunny a hearty adieu, and going directly afterwards to Solomon, addressed him thus,—

"I have arranged everything with Mr. Macmunny as to your salary, and assured

him that if the half-yearly report which he has promised to send me of your conduct be satisfactory, you shall never want a sincere friend.

“Here is my address.”—And, so saying, the old gentleman gave Solomon his card, begged that he might hear from him often, and embraced him with ardent affection, if not with some agitation.

The embrace was returned by Solomon with no less; and in two minutes more the old gentleman was driven in a post-chaise from the door of the George.

Solomon felt once more friendless.

As for Mr. Macmunny (so little are men prepared in this world to see a generous action), he thought there was a good deal more than met the eye in the relationship which existed between his young clerk and the old gentleman.

“Very strange, indeed,” said the Glasgow merchant, when he went home, to his wife, and told her, as he was dressing for dinner, what had occurred. “*Sae* muckle kindness,

8 MR. MACMUNNY'S CHARITABLE SPECULATIONS.

an' generosity, an' anxiety about the youth, an' a' on an eight days' acquaintance at an inn!" said he.

"Very strange, indeed, my dear," said Mrs. Macmunny.

"An', then, only think o' the coincidencce o' their baith arrivin' at the inn the same night!" said Mr. Macmunny.

"Extraordinar'!" replied his spouse.

"I wish," continued Mr. Mac, "that Mrs. Seesaw may hae been as honest to her gude-man as she should hae been."

"So do I," sighed Mrs. Macmunny.

"But, however, ye ken, Janet,"—that was Mrs. Macmunny's Christian name,—"that it's nae concern o' ours," said her husband; "an' ye ken too, that the minister's aye tellin' us that charity thinketh nae evil."

"Very true," said Mrs. Macmunny, who, contrary to the general rule, was a very echo of her husband.

The real truth of the matter is, that various

considerations had suggested themselves to the calculating mind of Mr. Macmunny, all tending to foster the desire that the old gentleman might prove to be Solomon's real father; which circumstance, though the relationship could never be recognised, might induce him to leave the lad his fortune; and upon this hypothesis, of which the wish was father to the thought, Mr. Macmunny soliloquized thus :

“ He's a wise father that kens his ain son ; and mony wiser anes than the late Mr. Seesaw, if a' I've heard o' him be true, hae been mistaken on this point.

“ Weel, supposin' the auld gentleman to be Solomon's father, he bein' a bachelor o' sixty-five, an' no' likely to marry, would naturally leave the maist o' his fortune to this young man. The part o' that fortune at his ain disposal, beside the entailed property, is, as my frien' Mr. Calcult assures me, full a hunner' an' fifty thousan' pounds.

“ Supposin’ him to leave Solomon only the half o’t, that would be seeventy-five thousan’; an’ seeventy-five thousan’ poon’s added, some five or six years frae this time, to the capital of Macmunny, Turnit, Turnit, and Co., wi’ Solomon as a partner, if he conducts himsel’ weel, would be nae bad spec.

“ The auld gentleman’s rather infirm; an’ I daresay he’ll no muckle outlive the time I anticipate. The house is staunch enough yet; an’ in the highest credit: but there’s nae denyin’ that we’ve had some heavy losses o’ late. Seeventy thousan’ would be a very desirable addition to our capital; an’ enable me to withdraw my share, and retire frae business.

“ But beside a’ this, I hae a daughter, just about Solomon’s age.

“ She maun hae a husband; an’ to consummate the ceremony, by gi’en her a seeventy thousan’ pounder, and makin’ him a partner, on ane an’ the same day, would be nae bad job.

“ We’ll see how things gang on.

“ I’ll no say a word about the matter to my wife,

till I'm a little riper for action : I'll only caution her to be very ceevil an' kin' to Solomon."

This soliloquy, half mental, half pronounced aloud, was indulged in by Mr. Macmunny as, with his legs outstretched, and folded the one over the other, before his dining-room fire, he sipped in magnificent grandeur and solitude, by the light of a large piece of Kennel coal, his darling beverage, rum-punch.

When he came to the calculation of the number of years which the old gentleman might have to live ; of the age of his daughter, at the probable period of the bachelor's death ; of Solomon's, at the same important juncture, and of the sum, after deducting legacy duty, which would probably come to the hopeful youth, now a clerk in the house of Macmunny, Turnit, Turnit, and Co., the prior of this respectable firm put the fore-finger of his right hand on the thumb of his left, and thence ran the gamut of all the fingers of the said left, in deep intensity of calculation.

His computations were music to his soul ; and in the fulness of his almost realised hopes, he bade an unwonted adieu to his empty punch-bowl.

He joined Mrs. Macmunny in the drawing-room ; and a little, but not unreasonably elated, he addressed his cara sposa, now left by the family to herself, emphatically thus,—

“ My dear Janet, ye see this said Solomon seems to me a very nice lad.

“ It’s no’ our concern to ask wha his father is. He passes for the legitimate offspring o’ Mr. and Mrs. Seesaw ; very respectable people in their way, though no ow’r-buren’d wi’ the gude things o’ this life.

“ But leavin’ that out o’ the question, I’ve an obligation to fulfil to our correspondent, that recommended Solomon sae warmly ; an’ we maun mak’ a p’int o’ bein’ kind and ceevil to the lad.

“ Let’s hae him occasionally to dinner, an’ as often as he likes to tea. He’s cleever at

chess: an' maybe he may gi'e Maggie some lessons at it. Besides, ye ken it'll keep him out o' harm's way, at night; an' maybe,—maybe;—I hae mair to say; but I'll say't at anither time,—wha' kens *what* may happen?"

"Surely," said Mrs. Macmunny.

"I like the young man very weel mysel'; an' as to his birth an' parentage, as you say, that's a thing we've naething to do wi'."

Next day, Solomon transferred himself from the George Inn to a lodging in the Trongate; and the day after that, he occupied the actual seat of Mr. Keenyin in the counting-house of Messrs. Macmunny, Turnit, Turnit, and Co.

Here, for the present, we must leave him, to take a peep at the two family circles of Llangollen.

CHAPTER II.

In which Solomon makes some progress in the arts of love and war, and in the favour of Mr. Macmunny and of the old Gentleman—Major Struttit is introduced to the reader—Various family movements.

THE events recorded since Solomon's departure from Llangollen occupy a great space, but a very short time. He had not been absent more than a fortnight from the desk of the dominie, when he found himself seated at one of the many desks in Mr. Macmunny's counting-house.

He was now copying letters, making out invoices, and filling up bills of lading. Virgil and Homer were laid aside except of an evening; for the study of Horace there was but scanty time; and Euclid and algebra were

in a good measure superseded by plain worldly summations, and subtractions of pounds, shillings, and pence. Yet Solomon being determined not to lose what he had acquired, and, as he could not well act up to this resolution without acquiring more, went on steadily and perseveringly adding to his stock of knowledge.

A lengthened account of all that had happened in the short but eventful period of Solomon's début was transmitted to Wales.

There was one letter for Mrs. Seesaw, and somehow or other a much longer one for Mrs. Wynne. There was none for Eliza: because her mother, in granting permission to Solomon to write to herself, had peremptorily interdicted any correspondence between him and her daughter.

But as Solomon's first letter to the mother was written without reference (except his kind regards) to the daughter, the prudential ma-

tron, even with all her prudence, put it into Eliza's hands, to be by her read.

"Do, mamma," said she, when she had finished the account of Solomon's success; "do let me go, and show this to Mrs. Seesaw; perhaps she has not heard so fully; and at any rate these additional particulars will be agreeable to her."

"By all means, my dear," said Mrs. Wynne, herself not displeased to hear of our hero's good fortune.

Eliza hurried on her shawl, put hastily on her cottage bonnet, and walked circumspectly out by the gate. She continued, with no small restraint, her measured pace, so long as she was within sight of the grounds; but no sooner did she turn the first corner which shut her out from the view of them, than, letting her bonnet dangle by the ribbon behind her back, and taking her shawl upon her arm, she commenced, in the direction of Vale Cottage, a race

which brought her there with so vivid a glow upon her animated countenance, now shaded by her uncurled tresses, that she looked like a mountain sylph returned from a chase with Diana.

“ Oh ! Mrs. Seesaw,” said Eliza, as she entered, “ here is such a nice letter from Solomon : pray what have *you* heard ? ”

Mrs. Seesaw exchanged letters with her friend ; and as the old lady, but young widow, with spectacles on her nose, perused the letter to Mrs. Wynne, she said to Eliza : “ Weel, it’s very odd ; but I like the letter to your mamma better than the ane to mysel’.”

“ So do I,” said Eliza ; “ but we can just suppose them one, and then all will be right. You know there are always some parts of a letter more agreeable than others.”

Great congratulations on Solomon’s present fortune and prospects passed between Mrs. Seesaw and Eliza.

The old lady was as fond of Miss Wynne, as if she had been her own daughter.

The friendship which had subsisted between her and Solomon, not less than the evident, undisguised, yet innocent interest which she evinced in his affairs, all endeared her to the heart of the fond mother.

Mrs. Seesaw was an odd person in her way, it is true; but she was what in Scotland is called "a downright woman." She was frank, candid, outspoken, and sincere, with a fund of affection, simplicity and *naïveté*, that not only reached the heart's core of her friends and relations, but cheered and charmed the friendless and the poor. Of these she had many on her civil list, scanty as it was, whom she rather magniloquently designated "her pensioners." You might have seen them assembled, to the number of eighteen or twenty, every Saturday morning, around her humble abode; and soup, and old clothes, and baby linen, and threepence to this poor old man, and twopence to that widow woman, farls of oaten cake, and even, now and then, a glass of whisky to a benumbed

creature in rags, were distributed with a liberality of hand, which though it often trenched greatly on imprudent Mrs. Seesaw's purse, fell greatly short of the donations that in better circumstances would have been bestowed by her generous heart.

Let it not be alleged that these benevolent propensities are at variance with the sometimes unscrupulous authority which Mrs. Seesaw exercised to his great grievance, over her husband ; not at all.

The peculiar feelings which often grow up between man and wife are entirely irrespective of general character, and, if nicely analyzed, might be traced to principles which have nothing to *do* with that, but with circumstances which have peculiarly modified the relative position of the contending parties.

I have often known women, who were turbulent rulers of their husbands, and, yet in all other respects, the gentlest members of society.

It need not be said how much the kind Mrs. Seesaw's affection for Eliza was increased, nor how her respect for her grew, by the fact of the young lady's co-operating with the old one in her charitable purposes.

Every Saturday morning, at ten, was Eliza to be found at Vale Cottage, with oblations for Mrs. Seesaw's "pensioners."

This Lady was so delighted to give out with her own hands to her pensioners the joint contributions of Eliza and herself, that when she was well, nothing prevented her fulfilling the pleasing duty. She moved among them, with Eliza as her almoner, and veritable joy was depicted in the countenances of both philanthropists.

But when Mrs. Seesaw was ill, as it frequently happened, Eliza acted as sole distributor of their joint bounty; and the caps and aprons, bonnets, and coarse cloaks, soups, jellies, sixpences, shoes, stockings, worsted gloves, supplied by Eliza, were by her dis-

tributed, together with Mrs. Seesaw's regular donations, to ever increasing but always judiciously selected applicants.

The old lady and the young one were the praise and admiration of "all the country round."

Thus did things stand in Llangollen. The school proceeded under Tammy, almost as well as it had done under Solomon; and the widow Seesaw, still under the restraint of the first year's decent requirements, neither received advances, nor, what is more extraordinary, made them.

About this time, a sad domestic affliction overtook Mrs. Seesaw.

The scarlet fever swept in its devastating course over the country and abode in which she dwelt; and in the brief space of eight days, swept off her three young, and pretty daughters.

She was left disconsolate; and her grief for the departed dead was protracted for a long season.

But *after* a season, time came to her relief as it does to that of every one similarly bereaved. She had the sympathy, in her untimely loss, of all the villagers, and especially of Mrs. and Eliza Wynne ; and though, for some months, she sighed over the absence of Solomon, the departure, without hope of return, of her three children, and the comparatively desolate state of her household, now with Tammy, Archy and the two servants as its only inmates, yet *time* still continued to shed the balm of alleviation over her sorrows.

Meanwhile Mrs. Wynne was a little troubled in spirit ; for, with a great regard for Solomon, she yet did not exactly desire him for a husband to her daughter. She could not but confess, with regret, that she had unconsciously fostered an intimacy which it was now plain had grown into a rooted attachment between Solomon and Eliza.

She found it difficult to overcome her old prejudices in favour of fortune and of family ;

and she knew that Solomon had no great pretensions to either.

She determined, therefore, by all means, but without coming to any direct explanation on the subject, to diminish, as much as might be, her intercourse with the Seesaws, and especially with the eldest scion of that house.

As for Eliza, all the trees of the garden seemed to have lost both their beauty and their fragrance, since that scion no longer appeared under their shade.

“Like Niobe, all tears,” or like the weeping willow, as it hangs over the stream, Eliza drooped, and yet in her sadness looked more beautiful.

After this little peep at the family circle, the reader must be desired to travel, at a somewhat rapid pace, over a considerable period of Solomon’s life,—taking only the outlines necessary to dovetail his career into one consecutive story.

The period in question extends to no shorter a time than seven years.

During this interval, Solomon sat at one of the desks of Mr. Macmunny; but it was not at Mr. Keenyin's desk.

The quondam dominie of the family school at Llangollen had risen from that honourable post to be the head clerk of the counting-house of Mr. Macmunny; and his (Solomon's) salary, from being a hundred a-year, had risen to three hundred. He had gained the confidence of his employers, and eclipsed his competing quill-drivers.

One only incident during these seven years is worthy of record in his professional career.

A senior clerk, whether moved by jealousy on seeing Mr. Macmunny's partiality for an upstart, or by a real conviction that the upstart did not properly perform his duty, told him that he was a "lubberly rascal."

A large ruler was at Solomon's right hand; and, not very patient at any time, but still less able to put up with a personal insult from one, who, though above him in office, he considered his inferior, he seized





the ruler, elevated it to the extreme height to which his right hand could reach without detaching itself from his arm—"And now," said he, "Sir, will you repeat that assertion?"

The senior clerk, nothing daunted, did repeat it; and scarcely had the last word escaped his lips, when down upon his devoted pate, impelled with all the impulse of Solomon's brawny arm, fell the counting-house weapon.

Thick as that pate was, the blow stunned the superior in office, so that he stumbled from his stool. Not only by his fall, but by the hubbub which ensued, the partners of Messrs. Macmunny and Co. were seriously alarmed.

Out from his sanctum sanctorum rushed Mr. Macmunny. He saw the senior clerk prostrate on the floor, the junior one in a towering and uncompromising passion; and he heard every voice raised in unanimous condemnation of Solomon.

"What's this?—What in the name o' gude-ness is this?" said Mr. Macmunny to one of the senior clerks.

"Sir," said the senior clerk, "Mr. Seesaw has, without the slightest provocation, knockit doon, an' I wish he may nae hae killed, Mr. Keepcash."

"What outrage is this that you have committed, Sir?" said Mr. Macmunny, turning angrily round to Solomon, who, having laid the ruler on the desk, had resumed, with great composure, the work on which he had been engaged before the assault.

"What have I done, Sir?" respectfully, but firmly, replied Solomon; "I have knocked down Mr. Keepcash for his impertinence, and if he, or any other person, were again to use to me the words which he did, I should take upon him similar and summary revenge. I gave him an opportunity of retracting his expressions; he would not do it; and, as I did not think him worth a shot, I took the weapon that came readiest to my hand, wherewith to chastise his insolence.

"But now," said Solomon, taking up his

hat, and preparing to walk out of the counting-house, "Mr. Keepcash knows where to find me; and I am ready to give him whatever satisfaction he pleases.

"For you, Sir," respectfully addressing Mr. Macmunny, Solomon emphatically said, "I have the highest regard; but, still I cannot forget the regard due to my own feelings; and if, in sustaining that, I have done what you think incompatible with the subordination required in your office, I shall willingly resign my situation in it."

So saying, the young gentleman marched off to his lodgings.

He had not been there more than an hour, when Mr. Macmunny entered; and in a spirit of soothing remonstrance told Solomon, "That he had raised a terrible bump on the head of Mr. Keepcash; but that nae doubt there had been strong provocation, especially as it was certain that he, Solomon, was not what he had been called, 'a lubberly rascal.'

"But, however," said the merchant, "it's a' ower now; Mr. Keepcash has expressed himsel' sorry for what has occurred; he has nae inclination to fight a duel, an' if he had, it would be my duty to prevent it; so, as he's had the warst o' the bargain, I hope ye'll ha'e nae objections to shake han's wi' him, an' mak' it up."

"None, whatever," replied Solomon; and next morning, and ever after, Solomon kept the even tenor of his way, walking among his brother scribes, "*sans peur, et sans reproche*."

This fracas happened about the third year of Solomon's clerkship.

He was now twenty-three years of age, having served faithfully, assiduously, and with the entire approval of the partners, seven years in the counting-house of Mr. Macmunny.

He had gone regularly once every spring to visit the old gentleman; and from his residence, in Langham Place, Solomon made an

annual tour of ten days to Wales, so long as his family remained there.

He was the chief support of it ; and not less the pride of Mrs. Seesaw : for he not only sent to her a considerable portion of his annual income, but whatever he could spare from the supplies of the old gentleman.

This personage continued to receive satisfactory reports from Mr. Macmunny of Solomon's character and conduct. The story of the ruler affray was related in a way to do Solomon no injury in his protector's estimation, but rather to enhance his opinion of the young man's spirit.

Meantime, during the seven years of skip, great and important matters, in a small way, had been going forward ; and a summary, or digest, of these events, in reference to the connexion which they have with the subsequent parts of the story, shall be here given.

Mrs. Seesaw had got married, after two years of widowhood (the latter year endured with great impatience), to a gentleman, who, hav-

ing been once a major of militia, and no small personage in his way, was now an inspector and overseer of roads, with a salary of 80*l.* a-year. He had a small patrimony of about 50*l.* a-year, and as much more which came from a mysterious source. The truth is, that Major Struttit was the reputed son, before any banns had been proclaimed, or licence at Doctors' Commons obtained, of the Honourable, though not wealthy, Mr. Gaylark. The Major was not allowed to rejoice in the surname of his sire, softened even by a "Fitz," for he was not Mr. Fitz-Gaylark, but simply Major Struttit of the militia.

But this, to a man of the Major's disposition,—vain of white hands and civet, of a stiff cravat, of a public employment, of a pigtail worn in respect for the corps to which he had belonged, and vain even of the revelation, promoted chiefly by himself, that he was the son of the Honourable Mr. Gaylark,—was considered as no small distinction.

For two years had the Major pondered on

the pros and cons in regard to a marriage with the widow Seesaw.

He knew she had an income of about 250*l.* a-year: it was evident that Solomon was increasing this by at least 100*l.*, making in all 350*l.*; and though there was certainly an objection to the two children, yet, considering that his own income was 180*l.*, making a total of 530*l.*; and considering, moreover, that Mrs. Seesaw was, next to Mrs. Wynne, decidedly the most important person in Llangollen, with not bad looks, and no end to what Solomon might do for the family, Major Struttit almost decided upon a match,—upon breaking up the double establishment (that is, of himself and of his intended spouse) in Wales,—and, through the interest of the Honourable Mr. Gaylark upon getting a better appointment than he then had in some other part of the kingdom.

So he determined upon carrying off Mrs. Seesaw as his turtle-dove and companion.

As for Mrs. Seesaw, she had no sooner set her eyes upon the Major, than she set her cap at him. For though he was rather old for her taste (the Major was about sixty), yet he *was* a Major,—a man that used perfume, wore a patch, puffed his face with white powder,—and, oh!—conclusive and irresistible blow!—she met him one night at Mrs. Wynne's in full militia costume.

The Major was a plump, rosy, round-faced, well-constructed man, a little like Sancho Panza—rather protuberant in front, but, on the whole, especially for Llangollen, a most desirable sort of man.

Mrs. Seesaw came away delighted with his gentlemanly behaviour and attention, especially as he insisted upon walking home with her. On the following day the Major called to express his hope that Mrs. Seesaw had not suffered from the cold, or from the pleasing exertions she had made to delight them with her singing. He was shown, at this visit,

a letter from Solomon, enclosing a bill to his mother for 100*l*. Taking, in the most tender manner, her right hand in his left, and laying his own right on his swollen heart, the Major declared how unspeakably happy it would make him to become the husband of so charming a widow, and the father, even if only the step-father, of so good a son as Solomon.

What need of more? Mrs. Seesaw curtsied consent; a licence was procured from Doctors' Commons, and, in eight days from the tender interview above described, Mrs. Seesaw merged her name in that of Major Struttit. She became *Mrs.* Major Struttit, and determined so to remain,—at any rate as long as the good Major should live.

The marriage was solemnized with all due formality: the Wynnes were asked, of course; and, after consideration by Major Struttit, and by Mrs. Major Struttit, who were the *élite*, and who were not the *élite*, of their ac-

quaintance, all the *élite* were invited, and all the *non-élite* rejected.

Mrs. Struttit, at this incipient point of the connexion, left it pretty much to the Major to determine, according to the etiquette of the army, who were, and who were not, fit persons to be invited, on so momentous an occasion, to Vale Cottage.

From respect to his mother, Solomon came from Glasgow to make one of the party. He felt little congeniality with his mamma, in regard either to the Major's manners or pretensions, and still less in his motives for entering into this connexion. He saw in it only the restlessness of the widow, and the calculation of the Major.

There was one point of attraction, however, which Llangollen still retained for our hero; and that made him ever glad to go there.

Mrs. Wynne was there, and still kind; Eliza, and still loving.

On the occasion of the marriage cere-

mony, which called Solomon to Llangollen, Eliza and he fairly plighted in Mrs. Wynne's garden their troth. They mutually vowed never to wed, he another lady, nor she another swain.

Mrs. Wynne, a little suspicious, if not uncharitably curious, followed them, as if by instinct, not to say from any premeditated design of listening to them ; but, as she came upon a little grotto, she overheard such a billing and cooing as, in the jealous anxiety of a mother, carried her straightway down a winding path, which turned into the little grotto, which overhung the foaming stream below.

And there, oh, bewildering sight ! what did she see ? Solomon upon his knees protesting eternal fidelity to Eliza, and Eliza weeping over him and assuring him of no less constancy.

Mrs. Wynne drew up with more than her usual dignity ; but simply said, with a haughty

and emphatic tone of wonder and displeasure,
“Eliza!”

Eliza understood the whole force of the appeal; but, being at once high-minded, and devoid of guile, after a first blush, she addressed her mother thus:—

“My dear Mamma, I revere your authority. I am most grateful for your affection, which I return with a love as sincere as any of which my heart is susceptible.

“But candour,—duty,—affection,—all compel me to the acknowledgment, not only that I esteem and regard Solomon, but that I will never marry another.

“At the same time, I remember the dutiful deference which you, on a precisely similar occasion, showed to your parents; and the same duty and deference, I religiously promise to *you*. I never *will* marry against your consent, so that you do not compel me to marry against my own; and I here solemnly declare in your presence, and in that of

Solomon, too, that no consideration shall ever bend me from this purpose."

This harangue was delivered with such firmness as convinced Mrs. Wynne of its sincerity; and with such filial duty as, though it could not command Solomon's concurrence, yet entirely commanded his respect, and increased his esteem for her on whom his affections were irrevocably placed.

"Will you," said Mrs. Wynne, turning round to our hero, "give me a pledge similar to that of Eliza, that *you* will never marry *her* without my consent?"

"I cannot—will not," replied Solomon, respectfully, yet sternly. "Eliza is your daughter; and owes you, as such, an allegiance, as well as obedience, which you can on no grounds exact from me. Nor will I compromise myself to a single point in this matter, beyond that of assuring you that I shall never do anything of which you shall need to be ashamed, or Eliza ever have cause to repent.

“I should have thought, Mrs. Wynne,” added Solomon, in a very marked manner, “that what you suffered yourself, from the same voluntary sacrifice to duty now made by Eliza, might have taught you better how to regard the feelings of others,—and especially of those you profess so much to love,—than to sacrifice them at the shrine of your own views of worldly aggrandizement. No doubt, had I been a man of fortune and family, the attachment which now you contemplate with so jealous an eye would have been hailed with maternal congratulations and delight.

“As Eliza’s mother I respect you,—as a prudential matron, I cannot blame you; for all the personal kindness and civility which I have received at your hands, I feel the most lively gratitude; but I must cease henceforth to think of you as one who would postpone your own gratification to your daughter’s happiness.

“Of one thing more I can assure you,—that I shall never aspire to Eliza’s hand till I can

solicit it with a fortune of my own equal to what, in your estimation, may entitle me to hers ; and, as a long time must elapse ere I am in a position to do that, you may keep yourself at perfect ease on the subject of an attachment which you cannot fail to see is ardent, mutual, and sincere."

Mrs. Wynne was a woman of really good sense, and of really good feeling too ; and, but that those recommendable qualities are so easily warped by considerations of personal interest, she would have been happy to see her daughter and Solomon, at a little more advanced age, united.

But when she reflected that Eliza would have a hundred thousand pounds,—was of high family, pretty, attractive, amiable, and accomplished,—the mother's aspiring hopes towered above the daughter's fixed, but misplaced, affections. Mrs. Wynne's sincere desire was to render Eliza happy ; but the solicitous mother forgot that, in endeavouring to

do this, she was stemming every current of happiness in her more simple and less calculating daughter's soul.

The lady-mother, however, was only doing what it must be confessed we are all ever prone to do,—that is, to force others to be happy, not in *their* way, but in ours. And especially if we can with feasibility adduce to them such a motive as this,—“What *possible* object can I have in this affair but the promotion of your happiness?”—The conclusion in the mind of the party determined to make you miserable seems irresistible; your saying that the kind proposal can never make you happy is of no avail; and every effort to escape the well-intentioned thralldom is termed folly, or characterized as obstinacy; till at length your kind and charitable friend coolly sets you down, with no equivocal hints and innuendoes, as a man who, upon the point at issue, labours under a strong delusion.

I once myself had an otherwise good friend,

who a little magisterially, with kind intentions, but rather short-sighted calculations, treated me *precisely* in this way.

When I objected to him that he had twenty points of character and conduct upon which I might as reasonably raise an objection as he upon mine, and many of which I did as cordially and, as I thought, with good reason, abjure, as he did mine, he flared up (in vulgar phraseology), told me the cases were not at all parallel; and, seeing this was the only satisfaction I could get, I took the liberty of giving him the cut direct.

Hereupon, I will venture to relate a short, simple, but instructive story.

Said a gentleman to Colonel de B——, "Are you aware, Colonel, that Miss Golightly is in an awkward way?"

"What is that to me?" asked the Colonel.

"Yes, but," replied his friend, "they say that you are the cause!"

"What is that to *you*?" said the Colonel; and turned on his heel.

This is a sort of philosophy well worth our attention, for the regulation of our intercourse with others. Much, much impertinence would be avoided by the study.

Mrs. Wynne, with many failings, was a woman of too much good sense to make open demonstration of her present feelings, in the presence, at least, of Solomon, whose firmness and independence she at once condemned and admired.

She therefore asked him both kindly and civilly to walk in to tea, at the very moment that she had determined he should never more find her, or meet Eliza on those grounds.

Solomon returned next day to Glasgow; and, in a month after that, Mrs. Wynne, with her establishment, moved to Richmond. She still retained her predilection for the country, yet also resolved to be near enough to town to admit of Eliza's introduction to her numerous friends in London; to place her in the way of being admired, courted, and married, by some man, if not of title, at least of rank and for-

tune ; but, above all, to place her beyond the reach of further intercourse with the perilous Solomon.

On Mrs. Wynne's departure, Major Struttit, and Mrs. Major Struttit, began to be shocked with the manners of the people of Llangollen ; and upon various considerations, propounded by each to the other, a resolution was come to that they should leave the detested place.

" We have now an income, my dear," said the Major, " of more than 500*l.* a-year ; I am offered a place in the Excise which will make it up to 550*l.* ; and, Mrs. Seesaw (I beg your pardon, Mrs. Struttit), if you have no objection, we will move to Ficklegate, the place to which I am appointed. It is true that the natives of that town are as much beneath our consideration as those of Llangollen ; but then there are the sea-bathing visitors, during four months of the year, from Edinburgh ; we are in the neighbourhood of Musselborough, where many of the gentry live, and on assembly-nights, and nights when we

choose to visit the Edinburgh Theatre, we can to town by the early coach, and, sleeping at my friend Mrs. Ducivil's lodgings, return home by the same coach next morning."

Mrs. Major Struttit liked the suggestion amazingly: the now diminished family moved from Llangollen within a month; and after four years' residence at Ficklelegate, after a similar period of Mrs. Wynne's abode at Richmond, after a like number of the old gentleman's at Langham Place, and of Solomon's subordination in Mr. Macmunny's counting-house; after all this long time, we bring our hero to his twenty-third year, and have to introduce him as acting on a more conspicuous stage than heretofore. He may be considered as having yet only made his appearance in the country theatres; we have now to bring him forward on the London boards.

CHAPTER III.

A trap is laid for Solomon; in which, however, he is not caught—A letter is accidentally obtained, and surreptitiously perused.

IN proportion as Mr. Macmunny had witnessed the assiduity and abilities of Solomon and still more as he had seen the old gentleman's friendship for him strengthen with his strength, and grow with his growth, just in that proportion did the Glasgow merchant's desire grow and increase to have Solomon made a partner of the house, and the husband of his daughter.

Many had been the flirtations on the part of Miss Macmunny, well encouraged by her mamma, who was well encouraged by her papa, to bring about this consummation.

Mr. Macmunny thought it sure that Solo-

mon would inherit a large part of the old gentleman's property; Mrs. Macmunny thought Solomon a very nice young man; and Miss Macmunny was convinced he was a very clever and engaging one.

Somehow or other, Solomon had that in him of air, mind, and address, which enabled him to shoot a good way a-head of his Glasgow contemporaries; and when he broke out in argument with his male companions, or entered the lists with them in competition for female preference, he did it with so much logic in the one case, and with so much earnestness (even while his heart was in Llangollen) in the other, as left him often master of the field.

Miss Macmunny was proud, therefore, of Solomon's being her father's head clerk, as well as of the hints, which had gradually oozed out from Mr. Macmunny, of the probability that the youth would become the heir, and of the little doubt that he was the natural offshoot, of the old gentleman.

Somehow or other, wealth and family sanctify illegitimacy, and bid defiance to the canons of the church against it.

In poor Solomon's case, the suspicion was entirely void of foundation ; but the hypothesis of its being true once established to Mr. Macmunny's satisfaction, gave him the better opinion of Solomon, as it held out to him the surer prospect "of gettin' the auld gentleman's siller into the concern."

With these hopes and conjectures, there was no end to the civility shown to Solomon by Mr. Macmunny, nor to the efforts made by wife and daughter to secure his connexion, mercantile and matrimonial, with the family.

Great was the discouragement sometimes experienced by the parents, as, in spite of all their hopes and efforts to the contrary, ay, and of their daughter's too, they could not but confess that this young lady made little progress in the siege which she had laid to our hero's heart.

They knew nothing of the Llangollen affair, nor of Eliza ; and were at their wits' end to account for Solomon's indifference to their daughter.—

“ Do you think,” one night, said Mr. Macmunny to his *cara sposa*, “ that the young man has ony ither attachment in Glasgow ? ”

“ I dinna' think it,” replied Mrs. Macmunny ; “ I dinna' see that he pays mair attention to ane than to anither, but the contrar'. Sometimes, to be sure, ye may see him flirting at a country-dance, an' the ball-room supper, ae night wi' ane o' the Miss Cottons ; but, may be, the very next, at some private party, ye'll see him no' say a word to Miss Cotton, but walk aff wi' Miss Twist, frae Miss Cotton's very side, when he kens weel that they're smoke in ane anither's een.

“ There's naebody that I see him pay less attention to, an' the little he does wi' mair reluctance, than to our daughter Nancy.”

“ Hech how !—hech how ! ” said Mr. Mac-

munny, "that's unfortunate, Janet; but as ye say he has nae ither sweetheart here, we maun just houp that time will bring about a change in his affections. It may mak a' the difference when he kens that I'm willin' to gie' him a moderate share in the business, if the auld gentleman will cum down wi' a moderate share o' capital."

Thus communed Mr. and Mrs. Macmunny, —he over a tumbler of punch made in the drawing-room, and she, as an evidence that the thrift of her early days was not forgotten in her prosperity, making a cap for herself, instead of employing the milliner.

While thus big with lofty anticipations, and complicated schemes, an incident happened, which not only increased Mr. Macmunny's ardour for a double alliance with Solomon, but rendered him fidgety, and almost uncontrollably anxious for its consummation.

The head clerk (that is, Solomon) had gone out on some important business; and Mr.

Macmunny, wanting a paper which he supposed he should find in the desk of the absentee, lifted up the top of it ; when, lo ! more conspicuous, by far, to Mr. Macmunny's sensitive vision, a letter in the old gentleman's well-known hand, apparently just opened, and addressed to Solomon.

All search for the document wanted was superseded by the intense curiosity which came over Mr. Macmunny, to look into the contents of that epistle.

He feigned the continuation of his search for the business paper, that the clerks might not suspect anything wrong ; but the letter to Solomon was in Mr. Macmunny's hands all the while ; and though his conscience smote him at one moment with a conviction that the desire of his soul was to violate every principle of honour, and the fear on the next of Solomon's suddenly coming in threw him into undescribable agitation ; yet curiosity, and the keen, gnawing anxiety to know the real state of the

case, overcame all scruples : and the merchant hurried back to his sanctum, with the dishonourably obtained epistle in his hand.

He read it in frightful agitation, drawing, at every ring of the bell attached to the counting-house door, the green sash of a window that looked into the offices of the clerks, to ascertain if it was Solomon that entered. The good Mr. Macmunny had determined, if Solomon *should* enter, to call him forthwith into the sanctum, and forthwith, also upon a feigned errand of pressing importance, to dispatch him off in another direction, and in such a hurry, that he should not have time to lift up the lid of his desk.

In this flurry and agitation did Mr. Macmunny set himself about the perusal of the contraband epistle ; and guess what were his admiration and astonishment, when, with frequent interruptions, he read as follows in the letter from the old gentleman to Solomon :—

“ My dear Solomon,

“ I have had a serious attack of paralysis, and am just, though very slowly, recovering from its effects.” [A ring at the bell ; a rush by Mr. Macmunny to the window ; not Solomon ; and Mr. Macmunny proceeded.]

“ I wish very much to see you, and that immediately ; for I have” [a ring, a rush and a tremour] “ very important matters to disclose to you. Pray, therefore, ask Mr. Macmunny to let you come up” [a ring] “ to town without a moment’s delay ; and tell him that the result of our interview (I fear it will be our last) may be more beneficial to him” [a loud ring, and a vehement rush to the window] “ than he can at present have any reason to suppose.

“ I have several papers of importance to show you. [A ring, and “ Plague it,” or something worse, said Mr. Macmunny, “ at the very moment when I am coming to the will and codicils !”]

"This," continued the old gentleman, "shall suffice for the present. Only set off for town, at the latest two days after you receive my letter.

"I met Mrs. Wynne and Eliza" [a ring] "quite accidentally, three weeks ago. They were both well; but your name was not mentioned."

["Thank God," said Mr. Macmunny to himself, beginning now for the first time to fancy he had a clue to Solomon's coolness for his daughter.]

"Always yours affectionately," concluded the old gentleman.

Mr. Macmunny hastened to Solomon's desk, and, pretending again to deposit there the paper for which he had before been looking, laid the letter in its place, and returned to the inner room with a terrible load of agitation lifted from his mind.

Scarcely had his paroxysm of fear and anxiety lest he should be caught subsided, when he began, with the forefinger of his right

hand between the thumb and forefinger of his left, to speculate far and wide upon the contents of the surreptitiously perused epistle. Scarcely had he begun these speculations when the ring of Solomon himself announced his return. Mr. Macmunny being now no longer in anxiety about the bell, continued in a posture of ruminating calculation.

But scarcely, again, had Solomon entered the counting-house, when taking the identical letter in his hand which Mr. Macmunny had read with so much fear and trembling, the clerk requested an audience of his employer, and obtained it, while yet Mr. Macmunny's fingers were in the calculating position.

Solomon had not thought of concealing the letter from the Glasgow merchant; for there was in it, in fact, nothing to conceal.

So young Seesaw, never dreaming that Mr. Macmunny could have perused it, put it at once into his hands.

The senior partner of the house received

it with a blush, which even his habits of business were unable to banish from his cheek, and with a conscience not the less rebuked that he now saw he might have read openly and honourably that epistle which he had furtively and in secret shame and alarm perused.

Hereupon ensued the following dialogue,—

Solomon.—“ You see, Mr. Mucmunny, that the old gentleman, my best friend and patron, is very ill.”

Mr. Macmunny.—“ I do, and am very sorry for it.”

Solomon.—“ Will you allow me to go to London and see him?”

Mr. Macmunny.—“ By all means.”

Solomon.—“ When?”

Mr. Macmunny, hesitatingly.—“ To-morrow: should you like to go to-morrow?”

Solomon.—“ To-night, if possible.”

Mr. Macmunny.—“ Well, to-night, Solomon; but do you feel confidence in me, an’

friendship enough, to gie me ony explanation o' the views o' the auld gentleman, as set forth in this epistle?"

Solomon.—“ Really, Sir, I am as little aware of them as yourself.”

“ Ah! Solomon, Solomon,” said Mr. Macmunny, “ I fear ye're mair shrewd than candid.

“ Do ye no' ken what is meant by that strikin' expression in the letter: ‘ Tell Mr. Macmunny that the result o' our interview may be mair beneficial to him than he can at present hae ony reason to suppose?’ ”

Solomon.—“ Indeed, Sir, I do not ; and as for your charge of want of candour, I know not what it means. You have never found me, in anything connected with your affairs, either uncandid or unjust. As for my own concerns, I suppose I am at liberty to deal with them as I please.”

Mr. Macmunny, taken a little aback, replied, “ Oh! yes, Solomon ; I dinna' pretend to re-

gulate them : only if the auld gentleman has ony views o' a partnership, ye can tell him that they'll be readily and liberally met by me."

Solomon bowed in respectful acknowledgment of this compliment ; and Mr. Macmunny continued :

" May I ask, Solomon, wha Mrs. Wynne and Miss Eliza Wynne are ?"

Solomon.—" The one is the daughter of an old Welsh family, and the other the daughter of that lady."

Mr. Macmunny, with a sly look and insinuating tone, " Weel, Solomon, I suppose ye tak' a particular interest in Miss Wynne : is she bonny ?"

Solomon.—" That Miss Wynne is both pretty and accomplished, no one who ever saw her can deny ; but, Sir, as for the interest I may take in that lady, it is a question that, as it ought not to have been put by you, cannot and will not be answered by me. And I trust I may never hear more of this matter."

Solomon here turned toward the door; but Mr. Macmunny following, shook him heartily by the hand; expressed his hope that the name of Seesaw would soon be added to the firm; and told him "that, by a' means, he might set off that evenin' for Lonnon."

Solomon had a real esteem and regard for Mr. Macmunny; and though he wondered at what he often considered his excess of kindness and courtesy, yet, not dreaming himself of the latent views that were under it, because not having the remotest idea that he was likely to be the old gentleman's heir, he attributed all to friendship and generosity of character.

With a bag and portmanteau, our hero started that evening for London; and in three days was lodged in the old gentleman's residence in Langham Place.

What there occurred shall be told in the sequel.

CHAPTER IV.

In which the Reader is instructed, rather than entertained, in the lugubrious style.

SOLOMON was introduced to the old gentleman in his bed-chamber ; and was struck nearly speechless on beholding the lamentable wreck of humanity before him.

He shuddered as he beheld the originally handsome countenance of his benefactor, distorted by the paralytic stroke which had turned his face awry, impeded his utterance, and disabled the whole right side of his frame.

There he lay, with the nurse on one side of his bed, and the doctor feeling his enfeebled pulse on the other.

The notary was drawing up a document, by the aid of many letters, and accounts outspread

before him, on a table covered with green baize. It was an inventory of the old gentleman's personal effects.

The windows were darkened; and the dejected footman, like all the other attendants, with hopelessness in his eye, was bringing in soup and medicine of which it seemed doubtful if the stricken man would ever be able to partake.

Consciousness was not gone, nor speech entirely defunct; and that kindness and affection yet remained, was apparent from the feeble but sincere cordiality with which, on the moment of Solomon's entering the room, the invalid extended to him the only hand now in obedience to his volition, with a "God bless you, my dear boy! I am glad you are come!"

Solomon burst into a flood of tears, which he was quite unable to suppress; and was gently conveyed by the physician out of the room.

"My dear young friend," said the doctor to him, when they reached the drawing-room,

"this will never do. I am aware of all that your noble, your munificent friend has done for you ; but you *must* restrain your feelings. Many days the old gentleman cannot survive ; but any strong excitement, and none more likely to arise than from exuberance of feeling on your part, will certainly shorten his little span of life. He is in his perfect senses, though he has received such a shock in his bodily frame ; and I know that he is most anxious to communicate with you on some private matters : but unless you can so far command your feelings as to show me that you can hear calmly and quietly what he has to say, it will be my duty, as his medical attendant, to interdict further communication between you and him."

Solomon listened to this speech with the most profound and sorrowful attention. All consideration as to fortune was lost in his deep-felt sorrow at the announcement of the old gentleman's speedy and inevitable disso-

lution ; and confessing himself unable to sustain anything like a calm interview with him that evening, he was persuaded to go to his room, on the assurance that there was little chance of his benefactor's dying that night.

" But where is Solomon ?" said the old gentleman, to the amiable and judicious physician, as he returned.

" Gone to bed," replied he, who had witnessed so many bed-scenes of death. " He is quite fatigued with his long journey," continued the doctor ; " and I assured him it would be more for both your comfort and his that you should meet early in the morning."

" Very well," resignedly answered the old gentleman ; " but I should have liked to see him."

Here the invalid sank into a lethargic repose ; and his faithful physician, nurse, and footman all lay down on sofa-beds, ready to offer any assistance that might be required to the dying man.

The morning dawned. Solomon, fatigued as he was, had vainly courted sleep to his eyelids. He paced up and down in his room, till, hearing footsteps at the break of day above him, he assured himself that the household was in motion.

Opening his door, he found the nurse just coming to awake him with a cup of warm coffee in her hand. Presently the doctor entered the chamber, saying that the old gentleman had had a good night; and that Solomon, if composed, might see him when he would.

Solomon *was* composed; and being led to the room of his benefactor, was there received by him with perfect self-possession.

The other parties were desired to leave the room, and the physician cautioned both the old gentleman and the young against too long protracting their interview.

The former, when left alone with Solomon, took from under his pillow, first one, and then another sealed packet.

With great effort, he feebly, and with frequent interruptions, addressed young Seesaw thus :

“ I am fast speeding to the narrow house appointed for all living. In one of these packets, you will find the brief and unsatisfactory account of a life characterized by fickleness, spent in frivolity, and, up to the period of my meeting you, clouded by discontent, or imbibittered by chagrin.

“ How it was, I cannot tell; but you awakened in me feelings of kindness which had lain so long dormant, that I was fast verging to the most miserable of all states, that of the misanthrope.

“ It was contrary to my nature to fall into a universal quarrel with mankind ; and I hailed with a joy which you can little understand the first warming radiance of affection, which was let in upon the increasing chill that was fast freezing the current of my better associations. I was restored to feelings common to the family

of man ; and all I have seen of you since, by giving me a special interest in *one* human being, has expanded my heart into good will towards all.

“ I therefore owe you a debt which I can never repay ; since now, on my death-bed, through the mysterious affection growing out of my acquaintance with you, I can lay my hand upon my heart, and say that I die at peace with the whole world.

“ As for the second paper, it is my will ; and both the one and the other are to be opened by you the day after my demise.

“ I can no more : my worldly affairs are all arranged ; my spiritual I commit to the mercy of Him who ‘ is love.’

“ Farewell ; and may the God of love give you prosperity in one world ; and undying happiness in another. There I hope we shall meet.”

Thus saying, the old gentleman leaned back upon his pillow ; and Solomon, overwhelmed

with sorrow and alarm, hastened down stairs for the physician.

Up this gentleman instantly came with Solomon behind him. Behind these two, walked the nurse and the footman, who were again followed by two or three other servants, all anticipating the worst. They had contracted a sincere love for their master; and that thing so rarely seen, real sorrow in expectant legatees, was unequivocally evinced on this occasion. In not one of the party was it more conspicuous than in Solomon.

The physician first entered the room of the old gentleman, and in a moment perceived that he had breathed his last.

There, on his couch, placid and serene he lay stretched, notwithstanding the ravages made on his countenance by his last illness.

The family group drew near to the head of the bed.

As Solomon and the physician looked upon the face of their for ever-silent friend; as

the servants, with aprons to their eyes, contemplated their master, as well as friend, a solemn gloom pervaded the domestic circle; and each member of it offered the tribute of sorrow moistened in tears, to departed kindness and to sterling worth.

Here I draw the curtain over the scene of sorrow and of death.

The old gentleman, according to his special injunctions, was interred in a manner the most strictly private and unostentatious. He was followed to the grave by his own carriage and two mourning coaches only, in which were the physician, solicitor, domestics, and Solomon.

They heard, over the grave, these solemn words:

“ Man that is born of a woman hath but a short time to live, and is full of misery. He cometh up, and is cut down like a flower; he fleeth as it were a shadow, and never continueth in one stay.

“Earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust.”

When the mourners had heard these words, they returned mourning for a season; but their mourning first turned to tranquillity, then to transient fits of gaiety; till, under the influence of that happy and constitutional antipathy of our nature to long-continued woe, they became convinced that “though sorrow may endure for a night, joy cometh in the morning.”

If the reader have been at all interested in the story of the old gentleman, and in his connexion with Solomon, he will desire at once to have the will laid before him.

But I must disappoint him in this reasonable desire, not because I would infringe the natural laws of logical anticipation, but because the party most interested (that is, Solomon) having opened both the packets delivered to him by his friend and patron the moment before he died, and seeing that one

was a will,—the other the sketch of the old gentleman's life, did, even in violation of all the rules of selfishness, excitement, and personal interest, throw aside the will, and read the sketch.

Strange, and uncouth, and even unnatural as this may appear, it was the fact ; and as, however we may condemn the practice, we cannot but admire the feeling in which it originated, the reader must just have patience, and be content, as Solomon was, to read the history before he peruses the will.

Solomon then read the history of his benefactor, as it will be given, verbatim, from the document placed in his hands by the dying man.

CHAPTER V.

The Story of the Old Gentleman.

As intimated in the last chapter, Solomon opened the MS. containing the Sketch of the Life of the "Old Gentleman;" and the young one, with deep interest, read as follows :—

"THE STORY OF THE OLD GENTLEMAN.

"I had attained that period of life, at which, though a married man may be classified as not an old one, a bachelor never is. The grand climacterie of this unfortunate class of society seems to be fixed, by general consent, at forty to forty-five years of age. That, with them, is the turning point of existence. They are considered, after it, to be verging into the vale of years. In a way of sport to others, but

of premature death to themselves, they are designated, thenceforth,—‘Old’ Bachelors.

“By the aid of a ruddy countenance, a well-cut coat, a clean chin, a slender and elastic figure, and a light step in a quadrille, I contrived,—as your men at Lloyd’s say,—to keep upon the A 1 list, till I had seen full nine lustres. By being upon the A 1 list, I mean that I was allowed, with a few exceptions taken by invidious persons, to rank as a first-rate man. By this, again, I mean a man, who with perfect propriety might have proposed marriage to a woman of two or three and twenty. None of those who had just passed their teens refused to dance with me; nor was I obliged, at fancy balls, to make my appearance in the decorous costume of a court dress.

“People rather speculated than pronounced upon my age; and when I had taken particular pains at my toilet, I was often told, by very discriminating mothers, ‘How *well* I looked!’

“A few obvious wrinkles under my eyes, and some awkwardly prominent grey hairs, began, about this time, a little to disturb my tranquillity. A very slight but evidently growing corpulency rendered it, at the same time, rather a luxury to me to draw on my boots with very long boot-hooks. I felt it becoming a great convenience to have my valet to tie my shoe-strings. I fancied I could neither walk so far, nor dance so long as I was wont. Young men of five or six and twenty, in the company of agreeable women a little under their own age, began to assume to me the forms of successful rivals. I lost, all at once, and without knowing how, my pretensions to command the conversation, or occupy, much less engross, the time of any popular or pretty women at public places. If I *did* chance, at the Opera, or an evening party, to engage her attention, it was but for a moment. Some well-looking and well-dressed fop was sure to step in between me and felicity. He was as sure to carry off,

upon the slightest approach, or offer of his arm, the lady I had been endeavouring, by the most assiduous court, and studied compliments, to win for the night. This generally unhinged and sent me an isolated wanderer about even the most crowded room. It was in the least agreeable, too, of all moods; that of mortified vanity, or wounded pride. The more beautiful or captivating the next woman I might happen to see, the greater was my fear of approaching her.

Neither did I like, after having been engaged for a few minutes in conversation with a person that all the men admired, and all the women envied, to lower my pretensions by paying court to any one with evidently inferior claims. This being perceived by many of my female friends and acquaintance, who had outlived five and twenty, they affected shyness when themselves were the belles of the room, and when I should willingly have offered them my attentions.

They increased, too, the number of those who had voted me "*old*," and they often laughed at my aspirations to be in favour with the gay, the beautiful, or the young of their sex.

Meantime, on looking around me, I saw that most of the friends of my youth or more advanced maturity had, one after another, deserted the honourable corps of gentlemen bachelors. They had taken as wives many of the women who I had often thought would exactly suit *me*. I had accordingly pushed my civilities to them to the very verge of that conventional allowance, which borders upon necessary proposals of marriage. Some little flaw observed in the lady's character; or some undefined notion that there was yet plenty of time; or the obtrusion upon my affection of some new and more fascinating belle, had always frustrated my connubial schemes; till at some unexpected moment, the lady was snatched out of the maiden circle, and made the happy wife of a man more deserving and

desirable than myself. Acquaintanceship, in many such instances, turned to coldness, coldness to total dissolution of intercourse. A bow and a how d'ye do, when our contact at public places was too close for either the cut courteous or direct, closed in the scene.

I was generally, indeed, invited to dinner, once or twice, recently after the marriage. But it seemed always from the invidious motive of showing me how comfortable, gay and happy was now the lady whom I had all *but* presumed to jilt. On every such occasion, I could perceive that I was beginning to be looked upon as a faded and suspicious beau. The lady of the house, with a condescending smile, would beckon to me to take a seat between two damsels, each of whom had, on the other side of her, some favourite *attaché*. Unable thus to command any further intercourse with my right and left hand charmers, than that of helping them to some of the dish before me, and taking with them a glass of

wine, I was left nearly a nullity at table during the repast. Instead of the devoted attachment which at one time I had for the society of the fair, I began often to feel anxious that they should leave the room.

A transition of feeling was gradually stealing over me of an undefinable, yet most disagreeable kind. The elements of it, if I could have allowed myself to scan them, might have been traced, entirely, to wounded pride, or yet less supportable mortified vanity. I had been wont to come into a room with the buoyant courage and hilarity which spring from a conviction that while you may engage the conversation, and command the time, of the most interesting persons of the party, you can, by doing so, excite the envy of all less successful candidates for favour.

I now came into most companies, not only with my courage very much daunted, but under a growing fear of some awkward rebuff. For though the conversation of the

men, of the married women, and of ladies approaching to thirty, was still at my command, yet I could not bring myself openly, and at once, to give up my pretensions to higher game. I was of course often exposed to significant and unequivocal intimations that the pursuit was fruitless.

One evening, being at a quadrille party, a very old friend of mine, a married lady, observed me without a partner. I had failed, as was now pretty often the case, to obtain the hand of the one only fair lady left disengaged, that I desired to dance with.

My married friend came up to me, having under her arm a lady of considerable attractions, but evidently verging on one or two and thirty. She begged to introduce her. Taken thus unawares, I had no alternative but to make my bow, and lead the *protégée* to a quadrille then just forming.

My partner was a very elegant figure, danced well, was lively in conversation, and of most engaging address and demeanour.

Her face, without being regularly beautiful, was very attractive. But for the sad, and, with me, almost invincible objection of age, I believe I might have felt disposed to consider that introduction, like hundreds which had preceded it, as the initiatory one to my wife elect.

No sooner had I taken my place in the quadrille, than I perceived that I had attracted the notice of some of my young female friends, who were willing occasionally to converse, yet positively refused to dance with me, except when there was no other partner to be had. I promenaded after the dance, rather more than the usual time, with my fair companion, in consequence of not having been able to find, all at once, her *chaperon*. No sooner had I delivered my charge into her hands, than I fancied there was a more than ordinary degree of observation bestowed upon me.

But what was my chagrin, on meeting a young lady of two-and-twenty, in whose suite of admirers I professed to rank, when she

thus addressed me, in a tone of the most provoking *nonchalance* :—" Well, Mr. H.—, I am glad to see you, at last, what I suppose I may call all *but* united to one in every respect so suited to you, except, perhaps, that she is a little too *young*." I was at this time upwards of fifty, and resolved upon having a wife not more than twenty-five.

I had even considered my pretensions to the hand of her who now addressed me far from ill-founded, if I could only have made up my mind decidedly to *propose*. Yet this person was ten years younger than the lady whom she had affected to characterise as "*too young for a man of my years*." The unqualified declaration came like a thunderbolt upon me ; nor was my conviction of the insuperable distance by which my gay young friend considered me as separated from *her*, rendered the less pungent or affecting by the satirical injunction, to be sure and send her a pair of gloves. She then leaned more familiarly than before on the arm of the officer with whom

she had been dancing, and moved off, laughing and whispering to him as she went.

I was stung to the very quick; for I never was able to take anything as a joke that had reference to my *age*. It was still less acceptable when it came from a woman with whom I had been flattering myself that age was little of an objection to me.

Looking around on the gay scene before me, it became as if suddenly tinged with a very lugubrious air. The cold and invidious observations of my young friend threw their sombre reflection on every object. All seemed happy but myself. The young were thrilling with the fervency and ardour belonging to their time of life. They were either in the full enjoyment of present pleasure, or indulging hopes of future, which no chilling disappointment in life had taught them yet to distrust. The middle-aged were mostly married and contented. The more advanced in years were renewing their youth, as they looked with unfeigned delight upon the gratification ex-

perienced in each other's company by their offspring of both sexes. I thought of the homes to which they would all return, enlivened by the society, or endeared by the mutual affection of husband, wife, father, mother, brother, sister.

I then thought of myself, as having lived half a century in the world without one of these tender connexions; and I became sad even to despondency.

My parents died while I was yet very young, and I had neither brother nor sister. I withdrew from the crowded rooms, the mazy dance, and the glare of light, all so little in unison with my unhinged thoughts, or in accordance with my terribly unstrung feelings.

I got into my solitary cab, and regained my yet more solitary home. The gloom of it was insupportable. I hastened to the club. There was only to be seen there, in one or other corner of the large rooms, some individual cheerless as myself. He was alternately scanning

and yawning over a newspaper, which, as his best companion, had been in his hand the greater part of the whole day. The sight was not to be borne.

I again came home,—stirred the embers of a comfortless fire ;—and throwing myself on a couch, began to reflect more seriously than I had ever yet done on the means of escape from my present loneliness. I felt as if I were about to be deserted by man and womankind : and I shuddered to think, if I remained a bachelor, how solitude might wrap me up in her winding sheet, a living corpse, or sickness, without sympathy, close in my mortal career of single woe.

When I looked around me, and considered by what imperceptible, but sure degrees, I was being pushed out of the world, even by the circle and descendants of my own oldest acquaintance and friends. I was nearly petrified by alarm.

The women whom I had known at twenty, and five and twenty, first in the flutter

of flirtation, and next with serious, but fleeting designs of matrimony, were mostly sober matrons. They had borne children whom I had long ago dandled on my knee. Being now come to woman's estate, these children were the belles and beauties of the day,—the very persons to whom it was yet my ambition to offer the homage of my admiration. They, too, were beginning to go off in marriage; and *their* children were becoming so many living witnesses against me, that I might, ere now, have been the grandfather of a numerous progeny.

The parents of the parents of these uncomfortable testimonies of my age were precisely of my own standing. I was now kissing the babes of the third generation, looking for a wife among the young ladies of the second, and yet obliged to confess that myself must be content to take rank and classification with the first.

My age was of course now become matter of notoriety. By the good-natured, I was still held to be not more than fifty-two: by the less

ceremonious it was asserted that I was nearer sixty. In this case as in most others, truth lay between the two extremes : I was just fifty-six.

I lay absorbed in these melancholy reflections and anticipations, till sleep, the true and only refuge of the wretched, laid around me her arms of oblivion.

Chilled and shivering, I soon awoke, however, to a consciousness of my misery and solitude. I looked around me. The fire was extinct: my two wax tapers had burnt to the sockets of the candlesticks, and were sending forth a feeble, glimmering light. It now shed its pale and flitting lustre upon the roof and walls of the room, and anon threatened to leave me enveloped in total darkness. I arose to light my bed-room candle; but before I could do so, the last dying spark of the taper was quenched. I groped my way to my sleeping-room and hastily undressed. I crept into bed, and throwing the clothes over my head, drew myself into the smallest possible compass,

in the ineffectual effort to promote circulation through my almost freezing veins.

I thought how impossible it was that such a catastrophe as this should have happened to a married man : for either his "*placens uxor*" would be with him, by conversation to keep away sleep ; or, should sleep come unawares, to protect him with a mantle or a shawl from any chilling effects. Then, for the *awaking* scene, how different from the one I had just experienced ! There would be the mother of my children,—the beloved of my youth,—the faithful friend and agreeable companion of my more advanced age. Sitting by a cheerful fire, she would have a book in her hand, to be instantly laid aside as I should awake. A cup of coffee would be ready to refresh—intelligent conversation to enliven me. Perhaps some one of the pretty prattlers might not have gone to bed, and the detention he expressly ascribed to his desire to say—" Good night, papa."

I considered next that for the never-ending

and laborious pursuit of female preference,—fleeting in its duration,—fickle in its choice,—and capricious in its exercise,—would be substituted the enduring bond of conjugal affection,—the even tenour of matrimonial intercourse,—and the bending deference of the amiable, but weaker vessel, to her lawful lord.

These waking dreams of fancied bliss were rendered more credible by returning heat to my late ice-bound frame. I once more surrendered myself to sleep; and, soothed by the visions of the morning, I did not awake till my valet's tap at the door warned me that it was ten o'clock. I arose, not only refreshed, but greatly composed. I was living in chambers; and I looked upon their cheerless and sombre aspect as one from which I was about to pass for ever, to a more genial atmosphere. I was resolved, in short, to marry.

No nearer, or more feasible object presenting herself to me than my fair, though a little faded companion of the previous night, I determined

that my first serious advances should be made to her. Of course I did not for a moment doubt they would be accepted.

My fortune was considerable, and independent of all exertion of my own. My family, though nearly extinct, was very good; my person was passable; and, except as regarded some off and on pretensions to the hands of haughty damsels, my reputation was untarnished.

I resolved, before having any communication direct with the party whom I meditated making my bride, that I would see, and get some preliminary information respecting her from the lady by whom she was introduced to me.

I took more than ordinary pains with my toilet, and sallied forth in my cab, with my little groom in his smartest attire, to make a morning call on Lady C——. I found her alone; and after the first compliments of salutation were over, I seized the auspicious mo-

ment for breaking to her the subject with which my heart was so big.

"Lady C——," said I, "who is that very nice person to whom you did me the honour of introducing me last night?"

"La!" she replied, "don't you know? Why that is the Honourable Miss N——, second daughter of Lord N——. She has declined, till this season, coming to town; and has devoted her whole life to study, and to the exercise of a persevering and uncommon philanthropy among her father's tenants.

"Without the slightest affectation of being a '*bas-blue*,' she has higher literary acquirements than most women of her age. Her conversation is simple, elegant, and instructive,—interesting, and often playful to a degree. She is so easy in her manners—so *naïve*, yet *nonchalante* in her deportment, that everybody wonders when and how, in the country, she could have got what we all believed attainable only in town.

“There is a sincerity at the bottom of all she says and does, that often leaves more studious adepts in the science of being agreeable at a non-plus quite.

“Her greatest charm, though she has read more than any of her compèers, is that of not affecting to have read at all. What would be called brilliant in another seems only natural in her. People are won to her by a witchery, of which, though they feel the effects, they are at a loss to penetrate into the hidden cause. Though a few more years will see her fading into the ‘sere and yellow leaf,’ she has won many golden opinions since her arrival in town; and in short, if you don’t make haste (I just thought what an excellent match she would be for you), the opportunity of securing a wife that will certainly be a crown to her husband, may be lost to you for ever.”

I knew Lady C—— was something of a match-maker. Even in my present desperate determination to become a husband, therefore,

I received her unqualified eulogium of Miss N—— with a little allowance.

After every deduction I could make, however, from the amount of praise bestowed, there was still enough worthy of credence left to stimulate my desire, or rather confirm my determination to become a married man.

I knew that nobody was ever much celebrated for qualities precisely the reverse of those they possessed. Seldom, indeed, has there been a character drawn without *some* foundation for the more prominent traits of it.

The basis of Miss N——'s character seemed to me of the most solid and desirable kind. Retirement, content to seek its noble solace within the sphere of philanthropic exertion; learning without ostentation; and manners, lovely and attractive from their truth to simplicity and nature; what could a reasonable, or even an aspiring man desire more? Still, I thought a little *cross-examination* might not be useless. I set myself, accordingly, to in-

terrogate Lady C—— after the following fashion:—

“Indeed, Lady C——,” said I, “the attributes with which you have invested Miss N—— are of no ordinary character; and happy must the man be who can have any just claim to the affectionate regard of such a woman.

“We so seldom, however, find so many rare virtues as you have enumerated united in one frail human being (and I speak without distinction of sex), that when I hear such a character described, especially if it be, as in this instance, by friendship gifted with eloquence, I am apt to consider how much amiable partiality may have stolen from truth, and what height of colouring may have been lent to the glowing picture by the witchery of the tongue. Not that I would seem to entertain any speculative doubts as to human perfectibility, especially in that angelic portion of our common nature, the softer sex. Neither am I

unwilling to believe the *very best* that can be said of them. God knows we men all lend our too willing evidence to the fact that you women are goddesses; for what man is there that has not, at least *once* in his life, had his divinity?

“ And if *every* man must confess that he has, the proportion of the sexes being nearly equal, it follows that almost every woman upon earth, at some time, has been raised to her apotheosis. We know, however, that the all-powerful god of love has been chiefly accessory to the translation of your sex from human to divine; and we must not forget that the amiable, though inferior deity-friendship, has often no small hand in carrying them half way up to the heavenly regions, and there arranging them as *demi-goddesses*.

“ Now this, to be candid with you, is what I a *little* suspect you have just been doing with Miss N——: or can it be, that having scanned her with the calm eye of philosophic impar-

tiality, you really *think* her all you have described?"

"Upon my word, Mr. H——," said Lady C——, you talk of the witchery of the tongue, but I cannot help fancying that some occurrence, quite out of the ordinary course, has this morning invested *your* tongue with a more than usual degree of it. So much, so prettily, and so *warmly* said upon the simple character, simply given by me, of a perfect stranger to you! Gods, goddesses, cupid, friendship, deities, and divinities, all crowded into the little space of a five minutes' harangue, upon a subject which you wish *me*, forsooth, to treat with philosophic impartiality! Why, who ever heard such rhetoric as yours where mere *philosophy* was concerned? What impartiality can there be where vivid imagination, working upon excited feeling, has conjured up such groups of unearthly imagery as you have been making to dance before me?

"I declare," said she, with a smile, which

ended in a downright laugh, "you are already a dying swain, and having yourself arrayed your Phillis in the attributes of divinity, you affect to charge upon *me* the wonderful metamorphosis. You would have me lower my estimate, and moderate my praise, of a lady who deserves a much more able advocate of her virtues and talents than I am. This, too in deference to what you call impartiality and truth. Now the truth is, if I had said a word less than I *have* said, you would not have been half pleased ; and if I were to say twenty times more, you would leave me with secret rejoicing and exultation.

"No, no, good Mr. dying Damon, Phillis is what I have described her, though I do not say she is all you have imagined her. I positively tell you, moreover, that all attractive as you are, unless you betake yourself forthwith to her, and pour out, at her feet, the unequivocal protestations of your ardent flame, some more courageous man presently will.—And then,—

adieu to the union of the love-sick Henry with the amiable Clementina!"

There was such a mixture of satire, ridicule, and yet affected sincerity in what my friend had just uttered, that I was puzzled what to think, and utterly at a loss what to reply. The first thing, however, which it struck me to ask was if her name were really Clementina?

"To be sure," said Lady C——. "Why do you think anything less pretty or sonorous would have suited either my description, or your more exalted conception of the enlightened recluse? Never; and so, Sir gallant gay Lothario, off and prefer your suit. Be content to know that,—

"To be wise and love,

Is not with men, but dwells with Gods above."

I now saw that badinage and raillery sat in triumphant judgment upon me in her ladyship's mind; and I feared further to expose myself, lest they should pronounce a verdict of "*felo-de-se*" against me, as a moon-struck lover of fifty-six.

I felt not much of the passion of love. My views of marriage were sober, rational, and founded chiefly upon notions of domestic comfort, which I fancied unattainable without a matrimonial alliance with a young and beautiful woman.

I did not, therefore, follow up the conversation on the subject, but contented myself with observing, that in order to pursue my suit, it was necessary I should again see the lady, who was so ingeniously presumed to be the object of it.

“Are you prepared, accordingly,” said I, “Lady C——, to extend to me your gracious permission to use your all-influential name, when I shall call upon her, as my authority for so doing?”

“Oh, by all means,” replied she, “and not only so, but know that I have raised you as high in her estimation, as she seems to stand in yours. If you don’t make a successful *débüt*, therefore, and send me, Mr. Scape-grace, my

gloves, within a month, (for believe me you have no time to lose,) I shall despair of ever seeing you the happy man it is at this moment in your power to become."

I never had felt myself so awkwardly in the power of any woman, as now in that of Lady C——.

She seemed to have discovered, at a glance, all that had been passing in my mind for the last twelve or fourteen hours. I felt the embarrassment consequent upon the conviction that the innermost secrets and communings of my heart were laid open to her. The tone of alternate levity and sarcasm in which she spoke did not at all alleviate my confusion. What seemed to me the most serious affair of my life was treated by her as a matter more of joke than of earnest.

Nor was this all ; I had by no *means* made up my mind to marry Miss N——. Yet Lady C——, was plainly intimating to me that she would consider it a complete failure on my

part, if I did not. I had come quietly to ascertain something of Miss N——'s character, and lo ! I stood in the predicament of being already considered more than half her husband.

I wished her ladyship good morning, and, driving toward Eaton Square, where Miss N—— lived, I resolved, before I should return home, to minister alleviation to the fluctuating and fidgety state of mind in which I was.

My heart palpitated in a way in which I had never felt it do before. I was agitated alternately by the shame of thinking it possible I might really be in love, and by the apprehension of sinking into the grave without any real experience of that passion.

I drew up to the residence of the lady, who was, no doubt, the immediate cause of my present state of feeling. I stopped, and scarcely stopped, at the door. I felt unwilling to walk up stairs, having arranged nothing with myself as to what should be my mode of address, or manner of conversation, in case I should

find her alone. Just looking up to the drawing-room window to see that nobody was there, I drove slowly past the house, in order, before I should enter it, to gain composure to my spirits, and respiration to my lungs.

I felt as if the current of life was benumbed, my tongue tied, and the faculty of breathing suspended. All this tremour and trepidation,—this unhingement of the faculties and of the frame, I was familiar with in the *description* of love and lovers. But never before had I been the *subject* of it.

The awkwardness of my feelings was enhanced by the conviction that I was not in love. Even in younger days, the approximation to my heart of that passion had never been such as either to disturb my rest, or unhinge my faculties. It was always mixed up with coolness enough to leave me the *sang froid* of self-possession, or with independence enough to make me indifferent as to the result. I could, at any time, break out into a

rhapsody, string together half a dozen compliments, and make up my studied glances of admiration or despair to the charmer of the moment. But I could, at the same time, always coerce myself, in a moment, into a state of very deliberate *froidœur*.

I breathed for half an hour the air of Pimlico. My endeavours were vain, however, to withdraw my thoughts from the object who engrossed them. I contemplated, for a moment, the splendid improvements in Belgrave-square and the vicinity. I sauntered into the Pantechnicon,—looked at old piano fortes and organs,—and reviewed broken-down landaus, britchkas and cabriolets. I tried to admire bad imitations of Reubens, and miserable moulds from the Elgin marbles. It would not do. I entered listless at one door, and passed out unamused at the other, of the splendid, but solitary bazaar.

I thence drove resolutely to the door of Miss N——. I delivered my card, and was pre-

sently ushered into the drawing-room. Five minutes more were given me to collect my fluttered spirits before she entered. At length she came; but, as compared with her appearance in the ball-room—

“Heu! quam mutata ab illa Clementina.”

A very plain morning gown, coming close up to the neck, and buttoned even half way up that, had superseded the satin dress; and a homely cap, destitute of all ornament, sat where before the tastefully dressed hair, decorated with plumes and pearls, had diminished, in a marvellous manner, the visible encroachment of age.

The flush lent on the preceding night to the cheek, by the exercise of the dance, or the aid of the brush, had now given place to a pale hue,—of a genteel cast, certainly, but verging upon yellow in the lower regions of the eye. Some incipient wrinkles were observable also in the vicinity of the orb of light.

Nor could the charms, fascinating as they

were, of this beautiful organ draw the attention from the invidious signs of waning charms so near it.

On the contrary, as the sun in his brightness irradiates the surrounding clouds, so the eyes of Clementina served but to show, in more distinct development, the streaks and halo of autumnal bleakness. The only remains of the brilliancy of my ball-room partner were the still elastic step, and the *je ne sa quoi* fascination of air and manner.

But these were not enough to overcome my strong predilection in favour of youth. My reasoning powers taught me that, as it was departed from me, I ought not to be so fastidious about its possession by another.

Reason, however, has very little to say in such affairs.

In the present case, its better genius was obliterated in me by long-indulged associations and feelings in favour of youth. I had habituated myself to pay my court only to

those who were at least a quarter of a century my juniors. No laurel of approving favour seemed worth the wearing, if wreathed around my brow by any other hands than those of youthful beauty. Not Don Quixote's receiving the honours of knighthood at the hands of a plebeian inn-keeper could seem to me less consonant with the high laws of chivalry, than opposed to those of hymeneal propriety my leading to the altar a faded *Dulcinéa*.

The whole train of blissful anticipations in which I had been indulging vanished at the presence of my anticipated bride elect. The enchanted castles which I had been building in the air, with domestic felicity as the foundation, and a young and beautiful wife as the apex, came tumbling to the ground with a ruinous crash to all my gilded hopes.

A native sense of gallantry and politeness, however, prevented any exhibition, on my part, of disappointment. I advanced toward Miss N——, and congratulated myself on the

kindness of Lady C——, to whom I was indebted for the privilege of making so desirable an acquaintance.

"We are all wondering," said I, "to the influence of what happy star we owe it, that you have been drawn out of the sphere of your honourable, but, permit me to add, lamented seclusion. It is scarcely fair that your passion for a country life should deprive us devotees of the London season of an *occasional* glimpse, amongst us, of the goddess Philanthropy."

"Oh, Mr. G——," she replied, in a tone of exquisite *badinâge*, "we rural divinities affect the purling brook, and the mountain shade, the peaceful valley, and the sombre grove. We have all read *Rasselas*; and his experience of the world has rendered it unnecessary for us to try it by a similar test. The moon is our lamp, the spangled vault of heaven our canopy. The birds are our choristers, and their notes come wafted to our ears upon the fragrant zephyr. We delight

to pass from the gorgeous mansion to the humble cottage,—from the atmosphere of cultivated affectation to the purer element of untutored simplicity. We have neither the wish to figure, nor the talent to shine, in this huge vortex of artificial attraction,—London. If we had, it is evident that the honied words of such cunning and accomplished panegyrists as you, falling upon our too-credulous ears, would totally unfit us for the simple avocations of a country life.”

“Not at all,” said I; “the pleasure, as well as the utility of life, consists in *contrast*. Study must be followed by relaxation, labour by rest, exercise by repose. Solitude seems never so agreeable as after the excitement of society, nor is the zest of social intercourse ever so truly felt as when it has been preceded by retirement.

“Reflection is the best preparative for speech, and the country for the enjoyment of town. *Vice versâ*;—when do the woods and lawns,

and shady avenues, the streamlets, lakes, and varied beauties of hill and dale seem so exquisitely adapted for pleasure and romance, as after a feverish multiplicity of engagements in the *beau monde*.

“As for the panegyrics of which you speak, how can *they* make any unfavourable impression, when they are bestowed upon a party who, with not the slightest imputation of overestimating her own pretensions, can receive whatever is said under the conscientious conviction that it falls immensely short of what is really due?”

“Thank you, Mr. G——,” was her reply. “Well, whenever I wish for a plausible pretext to abandon, *on the score of contrast*, real enjoyment in the country for artificial pleasure in town, I shall not forget the high authority, nor the ingenious eloquence, by which I am warranted to do so.

“Meantime, I fear I am too old a practitioner in the courts of country convenience and rural

simplicity, to be tempted from the bar of retirement, even by so plausible an advocate as yourself.

“ More celebrity is no doubt to be earned in town; but it is not by your country belle. She sees at a glance, and feels by intuition, that she can never pretend to move in the same sphere with her more gay and attractive competitors. She leaves them, therefore, in possession of the field, with regret, if you will, but fully assured that opposition would be fruitless,—defeat certain.

“ In the country, at least, she reigns queen paramount, and undisputed, of her own domain. Her pleasures, if less exciting, come more at her own bidding; her pursuits, if not so splendid, are more tranquil and enduring. If there *be* the absence of fashionable stir, there is ever at command the even tenour of occupation, *agreeable* to her, because it is useful to others, or solid in itself. Above all, the grand secret of being able to *live alone* is better taught in the country than anywhere

else ; and you know I have high authority for asserting that it is a *very* grand secret to feel ‘ never *less* alone, than *when* alone.’

“ There may, as Sir Roger de Coverley has observed, be a good deal to be said on both sides.

“ Of this, however, I am certain, that, wherever the *reason* of the case may lie, whether in favour of town or country, or, as you suggest, *between* the two, *habit*, a stronger power than reason, in us all, has entirely wedded me to a country life.

“ I have been little more than a fortnight in London, and yet I sigh to escape from the dusty streets, the crowded parks, the heated rooms, the dull theatres, the monotonous opera, the unmeaning rout, the insipid dinner party, the dilettante concert, and even the exquisite *tableaux vivans*.

“ One word of things which have nothing agreeable in themselves, but are, you say, made so by *contrast*. The allegation reminds me of a well-known epitaph in a churchyard at Cheltenham.

“ ‘I was *well*,’ says the buried moralist on his marble slab; ‘I wished to be *better*, and *here* I am.’

“ For my own part, being ‘well’ in the country, I cannot, upon any mere theory of ‘contrast,’ desire to be ‘better’ in London. If I did, I fear I might find myself immured in it, for half the year, under the enormous pressure of its gaieties and dissipation, till I should be ready at once for my grave, and for the Cheltenham moralist’s epitaph.”

Much more followed in this and a similar strain. In all that Miss N—— said, there was great good sense, enlivened by a happy vein of pleasantry and illustration. But her theory of solitude was much too Utopian for me. The idea of ruralising during the London season came with a shock upon my nerves, not to be mitigated by the ingenuity of even so gifted a casuist as Clementina.

It is very certain, nevertheless, that I was growing myself every day more out of humour

with town, because I was every day more and more obviously neglected by the beautiful and the young. One circle after another of *débutantes* had laid me on the shelf. Even calculating mothers, anxious, *at any rate, for a marriage*, were becoming ashamed of obliging their daughters to be agreeable to me.

Still, I shrunk more from the disgrace of being driven, and from the cowardice of going forth a voluntary exile, from the scene of my early gallantries and flirtations, than I dreaded the vexatious disappointments to which I was daily doomed.

Hope, with her flattering tongue, kept still whispering to me something of ultimate success. As she talked of the future, she ever laid along the path of the present the cheering beams of prospective happiness.

I took my leave of Miss N——, impressed with a thorough conviction of her good sense, and great admiration of her talents and address. There was a freshness and elasticity

of thought about her,—an evident, but unobtrusive bouyancy of spirits,—a cheerfulness of manner, and an elegance of expression, which strongly bespoke not only a cultivated taste, but the “mens conscia recti” within.

Had I possessed her good sense,—had I formed as just an estimate of the real value of society, and of my own position in it, as she had of hers, no doubt I should have rejoiced in the very *possibility* of having her for a wife. As it was, I left her with regret that her agreeable manners and good sense were not in a younger vessel, and that, instead of her love of a country life, she had not an entire admiration of a town one. I thought, in such a case, how glad I should have been to move about with her, the envied possessor of so rare a pattern of perfection.

A variety of causes prevented my calling, for some time, on Lady C——. I had only seen her and her friend at occasional crowded parties.

At length I received from her an invitation to dinner. I went. Miss N—— was there; arrayed in rich attire, she looked better than I had ever seen her.

A few awkward repulses, since I had last met her, brought me in the best humour possible to be pleased with her.—Finding her look so *very* well, I determined to escort her to the dining-room, and there monopolize her conversation during dinner. I felt as if I could at that moment have made her my wife, especially as there was no more charming belle in the company than herself.

Dinner being announced, I walked up to Miss N——, and was just offering her my arm, when Sir George de B——, cutting in between her and me in the genteelest manner possible, walked off with her from under the slightly inclined curve which I had made to receive her. I was greatly abashed by my unexpected discomfiture; nor was my confusion diminished as I caught the keen and sarcastic eye of Lady C—— casting a glance

of inexpressible triumph upon me, as she passed out at the drawing-room door.

There was now only one lady left without an escort.

She was almost as old a maid as I a bachelor. I had no choice, however, but to offer her my arm. I led her tall, lank, and faded figure to the banqueting-room. Her head nodded under a tiara set with pearls, and surmounted with feathers. She was rouged, even to fierceness ; and had a display of neck and arms, which, had I fallen in with, detached from a living frame, I should have classified with those of an Egyptian mummy in tolerable preservation.

I had for many years been jealous of sitting by old maids. To increase my mortification, in the present instance, the only two seats vacant at table were those immediately *vis-a-vis* to Miss N——, and Sir George de B——. My appetite vanished, as I and my *chère amie* were constrained to occupy them.

I wished her, from the bottom of my heart, at the bottom of the Red Sea.

It was in vain that I attempted to be agreeable, or even to conceal my chagrin. My words were half smothered in the utterance, and I felt something like the operation of corroding jealousy at my heart's core. This enviable feeling was not much diminished by my position as a witness of the happy playfulness of manner and conversation obvious in my opposite neighbours. It formed a woeful contrast to the vain efforts of my wrinkled friend on my right to say bewitching things to a person so absorbed by chagrin as myself. The scene was not rendered less embarrassing by Lady C——'s very attentive and ill-natured civilities to me. I felt assured that if I could have been one moment left alone with Clementina, that moment would have been employed in soliciting her hand.

CHAPTER VIII.

The Story of the Old Gentleman concluded.

At length the ladies retired ; I took advantage of the opportunity to draw near to an old friend, and ask him, in a whisper, if he had observed how uncommonly intimate Sir George de B—— and Miss N—— seemed to be ?

“ Intimate !” said he, “ why don’t you know that they are soon to be married ?”

A cold tremour took possession of my frame. I simply replied, “ that I was *not* aware of the intended marriage ;” and I became thenceforward, by the influence of an overpowering taciturnity, a very unfit member of civilized society for the evening.

Sir George de B—— had inherited his title from one of the oldest families in England. He had a princely fortune, and was not more than forty-five years of age. His person was decidedly handsome ; and though he had sown his wild oats with some profusion, he had become a provident husbandman long before the usual time. He was, at the period of which I write, considered one of the most desirable matches in England. His demeanour and address were most courtly ; but good feeling and good sense were ever peering *over* those, and showing that it was rather his primitive stock of manly urbanity that bore the fruits of courtesy and kindness, than any mere graft of polish and mannerism inserted upon it, by the laws and usages of good society.

Yet this was the man that had preferred, to any one in the list of fair pretenders to his fortune and hand, the very woman whom I, in my pride, my folly, or my dotage, had

considered, from her age, an objectionable choice.

I rose from table soon after the fatal information I had just received, in what temper and spirits may be more readily conjectured than told. Sir George had gone to join the ladies a little before I left the dining-room.

I felt too forcibly the ridiculous figure I had cut with my flirting friend of fifty, during the repast, to encounter her again up stairs ; neither was I in a good state of preparation to meet Lady C——'s significant and sarcastic glance. I had no desire, moreover, to witness further symptoms of the decided happiness of my rival and his intended bride. To the former I could not deny the palm of superiority over myself, in all respects ; the latter, in my regret for her loss, I had now invested with as many charms, as before, in my fastidiousness, I had discovered in her blemishes and defects. I felt out of humour with everything, and everybody, but most of all, with myself. The

parable of the Dog in the Manger occurred to me as forcibly applicable to my conduct in this, and twenty other matrimonial schemes. In the comfortable course of my associations and reflections, as I drove home, I began to doubt whether I had most of the snarling propensity of the canine species, or of the stupidity of the assinine.

I learnt, in about a month afterwards, of the marriage of Sir George de B—— to Miss N——. In due course of time I heard that she was become the happy mother of a son and heir. I also heard that Sir George, convinced he had seen all that was worth seeing, and learnt all he cared for learning in the world, coincided entirely with his wife in her preference of a country life.

They seldom left his magnificent seat of C—— Castle; but, entertaining there the witty, the wise, the gay, the good, the élite, in short, of their day and generation, the fame of their hospitality spread far and wide.

Miss N——, now Lady de B——, lived in the exercise of her wonted philanthropy ; while Sir George, not more liberal as a host, than kind and generous as a landlord, shared with his wife a well-earned reputation for all that is dignified and amiable in the station which they adorned. They reared

—————“A num’rous offspring,
Lovely like themselves, and good—
The grace of all the country round.”

For me, alas ! it is now ten years since the marriage of Clementina ; I am verging on sixty-five years of age, and still—a bachelor.

Many were the schemes to which I had recourse to become a husband, after the fatal marriage which I have just recorded.

I left my chambers, and furnished very handsomely an elegant house in one of the best streets in town. Long I looked for a fair friend to tenant it with me in common. Many a rebuff I had from some that *I* considered would have been suitable matches for *me* ; and

many a narrow escape, no doubt, from others who *themselves* thought they would prove such.

At length I became afraid of paying my addresses to the young, lest the tempting bribe of a considerable fortune and a short life should prove too much for them. At the same time, my growing antipathy to wrinkles and age kept me effectually from making proposals to any one, that in *this* respect would have been on a footing of some equality with myself.

In every woman I have seen, for the last ten years, *that would have had me*, I have sooner or later discovered some insuperable objection *to my having her*. I now wander, a walking automaton about the solitary apartments of my large, unoccupied house. The footsteps of three gliding female servants, and of two scarcely audible men, sound as they fall upon my ear, like Echo in a haunted castle. Again, for uninterrupted hours, all is still.

Not a hush was to be heard, but the sound of my own creaking boots, or the hollow reverberation of the bell of my lugubrious library.

When I sallied abroad, it was to feel myself a listless loungeur at the clubs, a nearly unnoticed person by any but those who were as much the victims of ennui as I was myself.

I sauntered down St. James's Street, along Pall Mall, up Regent Street, and turned into Bond Street. I was still a well dressed, but terribly faded beau; and an expression of habitual chagrin fixed itself upon my countenance.

I could not behold a carriage pass me with a handsome and contented looking couple in it, but it filled me with envy and regret. Society I shunned, as I was ever thrown upon the least agreeable part of it for entertainment. The men affected my company long after I was cast off by the women; but I was obliged, in self-defence, to withdraw from my male friends,

on finding that their sole object in cultivating my society was that of partaking of my dainties. It became a common joke among them behind my back, "That the old boy had never been able to get a good wife, but kept an excellent cellar." This was too pungent to be palatable, —far too true to be even endurable.

Such were my feelings and habits, and such my status in life ; my views of the future were yet more dreary. My family was nearly extinct ; my entailed property descends to a second cousin, who, with his numerous pauper relations, is anxiously looking for my death, without male issue. For my *personal* property, which is considerable, I knew not on whom to bestow it.

I felt like a "pelican of the wilderness," or "a sparrow on the house-top."

All my moralizings were wound up with the obvious, but now fruitless conviction, that delays, ever dangerous, are irreparably so in matters of matrimony.

The above narrative was succeeded by the following letter to Solomon :—

“ My dear Solomon,—

“ Thus far had I written of my story, when, about seven years ago, I met you at the George Inn, in Glasgow.

“ The current of my feelings was then changed; and our growing friendship since has rendered their course more and more agreeable and smooth.

“ You have brought feelings originally acute, but wayward, back to their ordinary tone; and while, from year to year, I have witnessed, with the liveliest satisfaction, your career in life, I have felt the sincerest pleasure in your simple and unfeigned attachment.

“ All I can do, in testimony of the sincerity of mine, I have done, by my last will and testament; and that you will receive, from my dying hands, with this candid, and not altogether common history of my life.

“ In your estimate of it, while I desire not

that you should aught extenuate, I am sure you will set nothing down in malice.

“ From the day on which you open this, you will be at once the master of yourself, and of my fortune. God for ever bless you ! and don't delay your marriage.

“ Yours, &c.”

CHAPTER IX.

When the will is opened, an agitating scene portrayed, new character introduced, and an interview obtained.

The next document perused by Solomon was the will, which being read in the presence of the physician, lawyer, servants, and heirs-at-law, ran thus :—

I hereby bequeath to my well-esteemed son Solomon Seesaw the whole of my estate personal, as per annexed inventory ;

I likewise leave unto him, for his exclusive use and benefit, whatsoever I may lawfully leave : that is, the whole of my property which is not entailed, including my house, furniture, personal effects, bank stock, property in funds, East India debentures, East India mortgages, loans, rights of cap-

tion, interest in bankrupt estates, leasehold and household property, dock-shares, canal-shares, railway-shares, shares in Mexican mines, and in Durham coal-pits, with all and every et cætera, that I can, or legally may, will to another.

“Moreover, I appoint the said Solomon Seesaw my sole executor and legatee, desiring him simply to let my heirs-at-law have that which is theirs by law; and desiring him to deal out, with a liberal hand, pecuniary memorials of an affectionate master to long-tried and faithful servants.”

“This is my last and only will and testament.

“Signed in presence of the following witnesses :—

“TIMOTHY TOADY, Solicitor,	} —
“JACOB JUMBLE, Physician.”	

Solomon, and every other person present, contemplated with amazement the latitude of the will, and the amplitude of the fortune

bequeathed, without condition or restraint. The second cousin took his legal possession of the entailed estate ; and that amounted to one hundred thousand pounds.

The unentailed property was estimated at a hundred and fifty thousand pounds ; of which Solomon was now sovereign lord and indisputable master. He settled upon each servant of his deceased friend an annuity of one hundred pounds ; with the disposal of the principal in their own way at their death. He then buttoned his pocket upon the remainder ; and sat himself down in Langham Place, at the age of twenty-three, seriously to consider what, under such altered and unexpected circumstances, he was to do.

Every servant remained in the house ; for Solomon was too generous to attempt to remunerate them with mere money ; and they were too grateful, even with the independency in which he had placed them, to desert,—or rather not most anxiously to desire to serve, their new master.

Solomon is now, then, to be considered as a wealthy and independent bachelor of seven thousand a-year; with a highly-furnished residence in Langham Place, with his carriage, drawn by two handsome bays, and his cab by a magnificent chestnut gelding. He had three riding horses and a smart groom, a butler and two footmen, the best wine and the best dinners that could be procured in London.

Now, though a transition of this kind,—from that, I mean, of a Glasgow merchant's clerk, to that of seven thousand pounds a-year,—was as likely as anything to turn a young man's brain, it had anything but this effect upon Solomon.

He soliloquized thus:—

“Well, yesterday, I had three hundred a-year, augmented by three hundred more from my kind friend, the old gentleman. But now instead of six hundred a-year, I have seven thousand.—What am I to do?”

“By all means, *imprimis*, to marry Eliza,” replied Solomon to himself, “if I can win over Mrs. Wynne to my cause; for, unless I can do that, I have too strong a conviction of Eliza’s regard for her promise to think she will break it, even if I had not too high a respect for her to be accessory to her doing so.”

It had been part of the Llangollen compact, that, though Solomon should no longer continue his visits to Mrs. Wynne, yet he was to have the privilege of addressing her, and of receiving a note in reply once in six months: for neither Solomon nor Eliza would give up the point upon which Mrs. Wynne was most bent, viz. that there should be a total relinquishment of all further intercourse, whether personal or epistolary, between Mrs. Wynne’s family and the individual Solomon.

So Solomon wrote to Mrs. Wynne once in six months, received a short and dry note,

with dry compliments, in reply; knew that the family was living at Richmond: and while his affection for Eliza increased every day; while his ardour in pursuit of fortune that he might lay it at her feet was, next to that affection, his uppermost thought by day, and his long dream by night, yet had he not seen her for three years and a half;—that is half a year before the old gentleman's death.

In vain he wandered up and down, during his annual visit to town, to see if he could catch a glimpse, even in her carriage, of the engrossing image at whose shrine he offered up at once his orisons and his heart.

He lounged about Regent Street, and the squares, the parks, the Diorama, the theatres, and the Opera, all in the hope of catching one glance of Eliza's eye.

He fancied how she must have grown to woman's estate since he last saw her. He had his doubts (for where, under like circum-

stances, do they not arise?) whether, in the midst of the gaieties and attractions spread out before her, Eliza would be able to resist her mother's importunities, and the seductive attractions of birth, fortune and fashion, by which Mrs. Wynne would endeavour to surround, decoy her daughter from her first love.

One evening at the Opera (it was about six months before the old gentleman's death), Solomon was searching as he was wont, through the medium of his Opera-glass, every box, with an intensity of interest which left Madame Pasta's thrilling notes to fall unheeding upon his ears; and of gaze which abandoned the corps de ballet to cut their pirouettes unseen by him.

Who may describe his sensations of joy on seeing Eliza enter a box on the second tier, in all the bloom and freshness of woman's estate?

She was attended by Mrs. Wynne; and

had there been no other attendant, Solomon's joy had been complete.

He would have gazed through his ivory telescope, till all the gas, and oil, and wax in the theatre had been exhausted ; and then he would have thought that the beautiful vision had lasted too short a time.

But Miss Wynne was attended by *another* person,—a tall, fashionable, but foppish young man, evidently courted by the mother, and as evidently courting the daughter, by all those attentions to her, which, by the tacit consent of the fashionable world, are allowed to pass current, as mere matter-of-course civilities, especially when shown in the presence of Mamma.

How different was the impression made by them upon Solomon.

From feeling, upon Eliza's entrance, as if caught up into the third heaven, he now felt as if plunged into the abyss of despair.

He fidgeted in his seat, till the gentlemen on each side of him politely begged he would allow them to attend to the performance. Solomon then rose up in agitation, and in the hope, as every other person was seated, of catching Eliza's eye.

"*Pray, Sir,*" said a lady behind him, "be seated ; you entirely obstruct my view of the stage."

Solomon did sit down ; for, in his exclusive love of one individual of the sex, he forgot not the deference due to all.

But it was a terrible trial ; and, seeing that he was on the side of the pit opposite the box on which Eliza sat, no sooner had the curtain fallen, than, leaving his seat, to be instantly possessed by another occupant, he moved round to the other side.

Determined to view more closely both his Dulcinea and his rival, he posted himself, standing, immediately under the box in which they sat.

Here his demeanour was so anxious and unquiet, that he presently attracted the notice of everybody in that immediate *locale*.

He attracted the observation of Mrs. Wynne, who recognised him; and at last, before the lady mother could hurry her out of the theatre, Solomon saw Eliza's eye fixed upon him, in astonishment, but yet with her well-known affectionate expression.

No sooner did this take place, than Mrs. Wynne, in great agitation, conducted Eliza, in still greater, out of the box.

They were followed, and that was what stung Solomon to the quick, by the elegant fop.

Young Seesaw, in his impetuous endeavour to force his way through the standing crowd in the pit, incurred the ill-will of everybody; for he by no means moved with the courtesy (small as it sometimes is) generally observed there, *even in a crowd*.

Solomon thought not of that: his over-

whelming desire was to press forward; and he found people pretty much in the humour, which we have every reason to anticipate in such cases, much more willing to thwart, than to forward his object.

One man presented to him a broad shoulder, in such fashion as quite to shut up the only means of escape in that particular spot; another faced him, pretending that he wanted to pass precisely through an avenue which Solomon obstructed. One said,—“Dem it, my good Sir, remember that your neighbours have got toes!” And another—“I’ll thank you, Sir, to take care of this little organ of sight of mine;—do not exactly thrust your elbow into it; for, somehow or other, I have rather a regard for it.”

The result was, that before Solomon could reach the piazza, “Mrs. Wynne’s carriage” had taken its departure; and that he was left amid the din of coaches and cabs and carriages, link-boys, watermen, and policemen, to

ruminate in knight-errant, and disconsolate-like style, on what he called the portentous events of the evening.

Home he went to the old gentleman, who, perceiving him in an unusually dull mood, asked what had happened; and elicited from him a faithful account of the whole.

Of the affection between Eliza and Solomon the old gentleman had long been aware; and so far from disapproving of it, thought the connexion a very desirable one.

But he was determined to let the affair take its course; feeling that, from his own mistakes in the matter, he was the last person calculated or authorised to pilot a third party into the not always quiet haven of matrimony.

On the present pressing occasion, however, he agreed to find out for Solomon who the gentleman was that was so evidently paying his addresses to Eliza.

The jealous lover had thrown a glow of colouring over the case, not so much in keeping

with what he had seen, as with what he had imagined ; and though the old gentleman perceived this, yet he was not a little uneasy himself under the anticipation of the match between Eliza and Solomon being broken off.

Mrs. Wynne was too well known in the fashionable circles to require that much inquiry should be necessary to ascertain the leading facts which it most interested Solomon to know.

The gentleman he had seen in the box was Lord Loftus, lately come to his title by the death of his father, and to the possession of estates of which the rental, being nominally 30,000*l.* a-year, had been reduced by mortgage and arrangement with the creditors to 2500*l.*, in the shape of allowance to the heir.

But Lord Loftus was a fashionable man, very handsome, of high family and connections ; and it was therefore thought, by everybody, that he had a better than ordinary claim to Miss Wynne's fortune of 6000*l.* a-year ;

though she was of as old a family (not, however, a titled one) as his own.

In accordance with this just view of the case, Mrs. Wynne was laying desperate siege to Lord Loftus ; Lord Loftus to Eliza ; and Eliza (in naval phraseology) was fending off as well as she could, at once the suit of her mother, and the addresses of his lordship. Of this latter circumstance, however, nothing was known, or even suspected in public ; for Mrs. Wynne played her cards so well as not only to make every body believe that Eliza was a high trump card (which was quite true), but that Lord Loftus (which was not at all true) was to be the winner of it.

Faithful to her plighted troth, Eliza had merely tolerated Lord Loftus for appearance sake, and to appease her mother ; but it was under the decided and emphatic assurance to both that she did not, and never could, receive him as a suitor.

To counteract this perversity of conduct and

declaration, two circumstances mainly contributed. First, Mrs. Wynne convinced Lord Loftus that it was a mere girlish affection which interposed itself to the union, and which, as the morning cloud and the early dew, was fast wearing away.

Next, Lord Loftus required no profound argument to convince him that this was the real state of the case ; for he was in pursuit of the dower, not of the damsel ; and, so that he could get the former, cared little about the affections of the latter.

He was too happy, therefore, to be persuaded of the entire truth of Mrs. Wynne's view of the case ; and to conform, without, for the present, pressing his suit as a lover, to the intercourse and civility permitted to a friend.

But of all this Solomon knew nothing, nor could the old gentleman communicate anything ; and Lord Loftus, therefore, was viewed by the one in the light of a formidable rival ;

by the other in that of a serious obstacle to any match between Miss Wynne and his protégé.

“What shall I do?” said the young gentleman to the old one.

And without waiting for an answer, (as is not unfrequently the case when a question is put)—“I will go and call,” continued Solomon, “on the old lady herself, and demand an explanation.”

“I would not advise that,” replied the old gentleman.

“Well,” said Solomon, “I shall write to Eliza, and request her to appoint a private interview with me.”

“That,” said the old gentleman, “I think still more objectionable, because she is ingenuous, and it would involve a breach of your own promise to Eliza’s mother.”

“Then, Sir, shall I write to *Mrs. Wynne*, and state my feelings?” asked Solomon.

“What has *Mrs. Wynne* to do with your

feelings?" replied his patron. "You have already, as regards her daughter, agreed that they shall not permit you to infringe certain arrangements made."

Solomon waxed warm.

"Well, Sir, I really know not *what* to do; this state of feverish anxiety I can never stand," said our lover.

"Well," said the old gentleman, "*I* will call and see Mrs. Wynne. Are you willing to leave the matter in my hands?"

"Certainly, Sir," said Solomon; and off the next day started Solomon's friend (almost as much interested in the business as himself) for Richmond.

He was admitted to a short, cool, and on his part, awkward interview with Mrs. Wynne, who, from the moment of his announcing himself as the friend of Solomon, showed unequivocal symptoms of impatience.

It was in vain that he hinted at Solomon's prospects; Mrs. Wynne professed entire indif-

ference on that subject ; averred herself greatly surprised that any communication should be made to her on it ; and at this moment the well-known knock of Lord Loftus being heard at the door, Mrs. Wynne, more in the capacity of the worldly mother, than of the well-bred woman, curtsied distantly to the old gentleman, rang the bell, and, saying she was particularly engaged, intimated in no equivocal way that the hour of the old gentleman's departure was come.

Up he rose ; made his bow ; followed the servant ; rubbed the coat of Lord Loftus, as the one walked down stairs, and the other walked up, with that supercilious *whimper* on his countenance which was never off it, except when he knew that he was in the company of his superiors. The supercilious *whimper* then turned to an expression of most obedient deference.

When Solomon heard the result of the interview, he took the old gentleman's advice ;

returned to Glasgow; and endeavoured, terribly against all his feelings and inclinations, to acquiesce in the propriety of allowing the thing to take its natural course.

Now, however, that, six months after this affair, he found himself in such different circumstances,—his own master,—master of a handsome fortune,—and had ascertained that Miss Wynne was no nearer to being Lady Loftus than when he last saw and heard of her,—he cast most anxiously about in his own mind what was to be done; and what *was* done, together with the results, shall be told in the next chapter.

CHAPTER X.

In which the Reader will find a short correspondence—and the account of a meeting, of a parting, and of an embarkation.

IN fulfilment of his unaltered purpose of placing his heart, hand, and fortune at the disposal of Eliza, Solomon considered long and maturely which would be his best mode of procedure.

His first resolution was to steal an interview with Eliza, his next and more honourable one, to communicate on the subject with her mother: for he could not but think that his altered position would make some alteration in her views; and he considered that, if it should not, he would be in no worse position than now, for seeking an interview with Eliza herself.

He therefore wrote to Mrs. Wynne as follows:—

Dear Madam,

“ Though the interview to which, about six months ago, you admitted my lately deceased friend and benefactor, leaves me not much encouragement to address you now on the subject men broached by him, yet I cannot, in justice to once to you, to your daughter, and to myself, refrain from doing so.

“ The gentleman in question has left me a fortune of seven thousand a-year; my chief pleasure on which occasion is, that I may be permitted to offer it, my hand and warmest affections, to your daughter.

“ And I earnestly solicit, for this purpose, a renewal of our long interrupted intercourse.

“ I have the honour to be,

“ Dear Madam,

“ Your most obedient servant,

“ SOLOMON SEESAW.

To which letter Solomon Seesaw received the following laconic reply :—

“ Mrs. Wynne presents her compliments to Mr. Seesaw, and begs to inform him that her view of the subject alluded to in his letter is no way changed since she last saw him, and his deceased friend.

“ Mrs. Wynne begs to congratulate Mr. Seesaw on the accession mentioned to his fortune ; nor does she doubt that he will be able to form an alliance which, without being productive of family unpleasantness, will be every way as advantageous to him as that which he has, a little too pertinaciously, perhaps, endeavoured to form with Miss Wynne. To this Mr. Seesaw may rest assured that Mrs. Wynne can never consent.”

The first hasty wish that flashed over Solomon's mind, on perusal of this caustic note, was, that since Mrs. Wynne would *not* consent to the union he solicited, she might soon herself be united to the spirits of another world, that

have no longer the power to ruffle the course of true love in this.

Solomon now determined, at all events, to have an interview with Eliza ; as he had decided, by what should pass between them, to be regulated in his future pursuits.

Accident procured for him that which he had been for days straining his wits how to accomplish methodically.

As he was one day riding in the vicinity of Richmond, intent upon his sole engrossing object of obtaining, were it but for half-an-hour, an uninterrupted conversation with Eliza, whom should he meet but her own beautiful and elastic self, coming at a canter, with an old and respectable groom behind her, round one of the outskirts of Richmond Park ! He stopped short instantly ; and so did she. With great agitation, but greater cordiality, they shook each other by the hand. Solomon mechanically turned his horse in the direction in which his beloved equestrian was

going. His groom drew up to the groom of Miss Wynne, and the parti quarré, with apparent nonchalance, but intense interest on the part of the gentleman and lady, and no little curiosity on that of the grooms, proceeded along the beautiful road in which they were, at a canter. This soon subsided into a trot, which subsided into a walk, which subsided into a very slow pace indeed, as Solomon and Eliza revived their assurances (they were in no place retired enough for vows) of unfailing constancy and affection.

Solomon had no difficulty in convincing his fair companion that he lived for the one object of promoting her happiness; nor had she, in spite of her firm adhesion to her compact with her mother, any great trouble in convincing him that Lord Loftus was only tolerated, as far as she was concerned, in the capacity of a friend, in order that she might thus exclude from pretenders to her hand, a *foule* of mere admirers of her purse.

"Her mother," she assured Solomon, "while she had the remotest hope of an alliance between her daughter and the noble lord, poor as he was, would never encourage another;" and Eliza added, "that the terms on which Lord Loftus was permitted to visit her were as candidly declared to him as to her mother.

"But," she continued, "as both choose to conclude that time will wear out my affection for you, I let them think so; and I take what I consider honourable refuge from teasing persecution, behind their theories of my probable inconstancy to you, and final acceptance of the hand of Lord Loftus."

On his part, Solomon told Eliza, "That he was determined, under these circumstances, to embark his money in commerce; for that he was sure, if he could go to her mother with double or treble his present fortune, even Lord Loftus might be driven from the field."

Being of a sanguine temperament, and especially ardent on the subject now under dis-

cussion, young Seesaw assured Eliza, in glowing language, that, with his capital, he felt convinced he could make such a fortune in three or four years.

After this, and a great deal more, the lovers parted ; and just as they were doing so, the old Welsh groom, who had been informed by his companion of the change in Solomon's fortune, and now recognized in the man the boy he had known at Llangollen, rode up, and with an equal mixture of heartiness and respect, said—
“ God bless your honour, I hope it will be a match.”

Solomon shook the faithful domestic by the hand, deposited in it his purse, and saying “ Amen,” rode off in the direction of London, as Eliza returned to her mother's Villa at Richmond.

The first thing, after dinner, that the daughter did, was candidly to inform Mrs. Wynne that she (Eliza) had accidentally met Solomon ; and that a conversation had ensued,

of which she gave her Mamma the particulars, except those which related to Lord Loftus, and the principle of his reception in the house. This had often been subject of discussion before, and needed not now to be reiterated.

Very frowning was the aspect with which Mrs. Wynne received these tidings; for, though she could not but respect her daughter's candour, she could not but fear the consequences of such an interview.

Supposing that Solomon would now establish himself in London, and that if she and her daughter went out at all, they would meet him in the parks, or at routs, or at the Opera, on horseback, or in their carriage; fancying that she had no longer any safeguard against future interviews and clandestine correspondence, she determined, that very night, on a trip to Italy, provided she could arrange with Lord Loftus to follow them there, as soon as decency would permit.

Mrs. Wynne was, as *Martha Meredith*, a

sensible, and even a feeling woman ; and she continued to be so, even as *Mrs. Wynne*, till she conceived the project of having her daughter united to a nobleman.

This ambition grew upon her, and everything that interposed a barrier to its gratification was to her as gall.

But especially Solomon's pretensions galled her to the quick ; and so chafed, agitated, querulous, and petulant did she become, as from day to day something happened, (and often something very imaginary,) to oblige her to defer the hope of seeing her project realized, that she ended in being next to unbearable from sheer bad temper.

Lord Loftus consented to follow to Italy, in two or three months. *Mrs. Wynne*, feeling Richmond now a fidgety place of abode, and being unable to see that the fidgetiness was in her own temper, embarked for Naples, three weeks after *Eliza's* announcement of the fatal interview.

There, for the present, we must leave them, and carry the reader back to Scotland, in order to give him some idea of the extraordinary sensation excited in Glasgow, and in Fickle-gate, by the good fortune of Solomon.



CHAPTER XI.

A Chapter of little incident—In which, however, there are two Epistles, and some reflections, necessary for the better understanding the character of Mr. Macmunny.

SOLOMON had determined, from the first, not to communicate any of his plans to Mr. Macmunny, till an interview with Eliza should enable him to judge what was the probable course which the most interesting, to him, of all affairs, his love affair, would take.

He therefore, in the first instance, merely informed Mr. Macmunny of the old gentleman's death, and promised to write more at length, as soon after the funeral as the necessary attention he must give to some other pressing matters would permit.

Solomon wrote pretty much in the same way to his mother, only sending her a remittance, which she as naturally looked for when she

eard from her son, as she expected to see his letter in his own hand-writing.

This prompt attention to pecuniary supplies allayed the curiosity of the good people of Ficklegate,—that is, of Major and Mrs. Struttit.

The brothers, having launched into the world on their own account, were no longer members of Major Struttit's family.

The lady of this personage sagaciously remarked,—

“ We cauna' spend a' this siller in half a year, even if u' were to empty half o' the milliner's shops in Preston-Pans, new-furnish the house, an' you, Major, were to buy a new military shute.

“ We shall certainly see Solomon, or hear frae him afore that time,” continued Mrs. Struttit. “ We may therefore sit down comfortable, an' pretty sure that the auld gentleman has nae forgotten my son, or he could never ha'e sent us sae large a remittance by ae post.”

The Major acquiesced, with no small emphasis and joy, in the force of Mrs. Major Struttit's remark and inference.

He suggested, and Mrs. Struttit, being now in her proper place, agreed, that, as they were so well supplied with money, they should take the coach for Edinburgh, and purchase their finery there, unless the Major thought it would be better to send at once to London.

Mrs. Struttit declared the millinery of Preston-Pans to be execrable. She expressed her hope that upon this, as well as on other accounts, the situation in the Excise would soon cease to be an object to the Major, in order that they might emerge into a sphere better suited to his rank, and to her own footing in the world.

The Major said he hoped it would be so; but, in the mean time, he thought their wants might be well enough supplied from Edinburgh; and he set out to secure two inside seats of the stage, which was trundled

along thrice a-week from Fickle-gate to that place.

Mr. Macmunny was not so easily satisfied, nor content to wait so long, as Mrs. Struttit.

From the moment he heard of the old gentleman's death, his curiosity to know about the will became extreme. His fidgetiness was obvious to all ; and the Glasgow merchant could no more than other people, when they are brimful of a subject, prevent its running over in his discourse.

Yet it was rather by hint, inuendo, speculation and conjecture, than by any more specific or affirmative form of speech of an anticipated increase to the capital of the concern, that Mr. Macmunny busied himself in circulating the news of the old gentleman's death, of Solomon's expectations, and of an additional name being shortly added to the firm of Macmunny and Co.

For, though he firmly expected that Solomon would return rich, and become a partner, he

yet had his doubts and misgivings, not so much as to an alliance with his daughter (for that he was pretty well convinced now would not take place) as to the unexpected impediments which Solomon's known attachment to Eliza Wynne might throw in the way of the Glasgow connection.

The truth is, that Mr. Macmunny was now more than ever anxious for this connection; because, though he had a large nominal capital, many ships afloat, credit abroad, and credit at home, yet his fortune was, in some cases, questionably invested, in others a good deal overrated, and in most, of difficult realization.

He had large sums in outstanding debts, (many of them doubtful) in distant countries; he had many investments in others where the exchange was falling so rapidly, that he was afraid to order remittances; he had several large and not very healthy mortgages on West India estates; and ships which had been to sea for ten or twelve years, stood all on the books

as so much stock valued at prime cost, and in some cases with the expense of repairs super-added.

Then Mr. Macmunny had a great deal of paper, as well as many ships, afloat, and on this paper, according to the usual Scotch system of renewals, he was paying a heavy annual interest. His *expenses* were considerable; he had, like other merchants, some bad debts, and some losses annually to sustain.

So that though he was not embarrassed his credit was too good for that), yet he, and perhaps he, alone, of his firm, had the sagacity to see that, on the winding up of the concern, there would probably turn out to be a great difference between the nominal and the real capital of the house.

None of the partners could avoid seeing that an addition of sixty or eighty thousand pounds to it, in cash, would at that moment be most important; because it would take out of the market paper which had been long

enough upon it ; and because whenever a house gets a real addition of eighty thousand pounds to its capital, the public are sure to give it credit for having received three times the amount, and the Scotch bankers, to facilitate its bill operation, to six times the amount.

“ Let us, by all means, therefore,” said Mr. Macmunny, as he communed with his innermost soul, “ have Solomon into the concern.”

But a week passed away ; and still there was no letter from Solomon.

Mr. Macmunny's heaving heart, as day by day he was disappointed of this expected letter, could bear it no longer.

He did not consider that a period of eight days was no unreasonable one, to be occupied in the burying of a man, in the looking into his affairs, in the arranging of a new establishment, in the settling of present demands, and in the adjusting of old accounts. Mr. Macmunny considered none of these things ; nor did he even reflect that if a letter *had* been

dispatched to him at the end of eight days, it could only have reached him on the 11th.

No, no, Mr. Macmunny's one anxious and engrossing thought was,—“Solomon for a partner, and eighty thousand pounds.” And this one thought obscured, or rather obliterated, for the time being, all the powers of his mind, which, on ordinary occasions, were not only acute, but luminous in matters of computation.

Unable longer to contain, Mr. Macmunny sat down, therefore, and wrote to his friend Mr. Mactaggart the following epistle :—

“Glasgow, 8th March.

“My dear Sir,

“You have no doubt heard of the death of the old gentleman, to whom you gave me a letter of introduction, and who subsequently became the patron of Mr. Solomon Seesaw.

“From the interest I take in that young gentleman's welfare, I have to request that you will let me know, if possible per return, what

you have ascertained of the sum our late friend has left, and whether he has been mindful in his will of his deserving protégé : also whether Solomon is still at Langham Place. This being the needful,

“ I am, my dear Sir,

“ Yours sincerely,

“ WILLIAM MACMUNNY.”

Putting on his spectacles to read the letter addressed in the well-known hand of his friend, Mr. Mactaggart took them not off, till, complying with Mr. Macmunny's request that he would write “ per return,” he wrote thus.

“ *Bucklersbury, March 11.*

“ My dear Sir,

“ I have duly received your esteemed favour of the 8th instant.

“ In reply thereto, I have to state that I certainly did hear, eleven days ago, of the death of the old gentleman referred to in your letter, in

the usual form of a black-edged announcement, which I was greatly surprised to find was issued in the name of young Mr. Solomon Seesaw.

“ On the following day I had a note from said gentleman, requesting my attendance at the funeral, whereby I was certified that the event of the death was undoubtable.

“ Two days after that, I was informed that Mr. Seesaw was appointed sole executor and heir to all the personal property; which report says is very great.

“ But, as probate has not yet been taken at Doctor's Commons, I forbear to mention the various rumours afloat.

“ In reply to your last question, I beg to say that Mr. Seesaw is at Langham Place; and if all reports be true, he intends to keep up that establishment, and will have a large addition to his capital by a marriage which is on the tappis (I am not sure that I spell the

word aright) with a young lady of birth and fortune.

“ Having no more to say for the present,

“ I am, dear Sir,

“ Yours sincerely,

“ DUNCAN MACTAGGART.”

There is nothing more usual than for people, by too eager a curiosity, to get themselves into trouble which a little patience would have spared them.

Like eavesdroppers, to a certain extent, your over curious people, especially if propelled by the excitement of self-interest, though they do not get their unwelcome news by listening at the door, often get them by means little less questionable.

Your over curious man, if he see the letter of a third party lying on the table, *open*, will not scruple to peruse it. Though stricken a little by conscience, he will not allow himself to think that this is as great a violation of

confidence as if he had actually broken the seal.

Yet, in fact, it is greater; for while the third party in question could show no confidence by leaving a sealed letter in the room, he exhibits the utmost stretch of it in leaving an open one. And just in proportion as it is more base to violate unlimited confidence than that which has its bounds, is it more ignoble to peruse the unsealed letter than to violate the sealed one.

But your over curious man estimates the difference, not by principle, but by the certainty of detection in the one case, and of impunity in the other.

Then, your over curious man, having an interest in the case, if he cannot get news directly, *will* procure them indirectly: if he cannot get them by fair and open means, he will endeavour to obtain them by stealth.

As he thus gets them generally garbled,

he is often at his wits' end. He draws fifty conclusions which would not be justified by the true story; and he often encumbers himself with bitter thoughts, and dolorous anticipations, which the facts, when they come out, show to have been if not without feasibility yet wholly without foundation.

Just so Mr. Macmunny.

Not content to wait, or to allow a reasonable time for a communication from Solomon direct, the over curious and over anxious merchant addressed himself, under feasible, but really disguised motives, to his friend Mr. Mactaggart, and received the letter which precedes. It effectually unhinged the Glasgow merchant for business that day.

"Mr. Seesaw is to keep up the establishment at Langham Place," said Mr. Macmunny; "then he cannot be a member of the establishment in Glasgow" "Mr. Seesaw is to be immediately married to a lady of fortune; then how should he think ony mair o' commerce?"

He drew a thousand other ominous inferences, and raised a thousand other conjectures, which were nearly choking him. He had no rest till, crumpling up the unwelcome letter and stuffing it into the outside pocket of his coat, he ran home to make his wife and daughter as miserable as himself,—the daughter a good deal more so.

For eight days did the bewildered Mr. Macmunny wander about, mismanaging everything he had to do.

He alternately accused Solomon of neglect and ingratitude; for though Solomon had hitherto lain under no one obligation to Mr. Macmunny, yet this gentleman contrived to believe that he was under the most sacred.

"See," said the Glasgow merchant inwardly, "how I've advanced him in the countin'-house."

Solomon, by his own abilities and industry, had advanced himself.

"See," continued Mr. Macmunny, "how many civilities he has received at our house:"

the civil gentleman wanted to marry his daughter, and get the old gentleman's fortune "into the concern."

"But, a'—a's forgotten, in the day o' the young man's prosperity," ejaculated Mr. Macmunny, with a deep, deeply-heaved sigh, and a groan following it in a close succession.

Do not let it be inferred from what has been here said, that this gentleman had not a sincere regard for Solomon ; it was a *very* sincere one, though no doubt its fervency was a little increased by the desire for a double alliance.

CHAPTER XII.

In which a Partnership is concluded, and other not unimportant matters are related.

MR. MACMUNNY continued in the humour described in the last chapter for twenty-one days after the death of the old gentleman; and how easily he might have spared himself all his vexation, even though he had received no letter from Solomon, will be seen by what follows.

On that very twenty-first day, Solomon himself, in a post carriage and pair, drew up to Mr. Macmunny's counting-house door.

Walking in, he shook all his fellow clerks cordially by the hand, and was not less heartily welcomed back again by them.

He then, to the overwhelming amazement,

and inexpressible delight of Mr. Macmunny, walked into the *sanctum sanctorum* of that gentleman.

He had not only given up the hope of again seeing Solomon in Glasgow, but almost of ever hearing from him; and he was beginning to make his calculations, about stock in trade, balances, bills, and bank accounts, without reference to any anticipated addition of capital.

The appearance of his head clerk in a moment reversed all these feelings, and upset all these calculations. In the intensity of his joy, Mr. Macmunny kicked his chair a yard behind him, rushed forward, and taking Solomon into his arms, gave him a cordial embrace.

It was more cordial, a good deal, than any he had ever before experienced; but having no self-interested views himself, and still less suspecting Mr. Macmunny of them, Solomon returned the embrace with the greatest warmth and affection.

The truth is, that an idea had never crossed

his mind of forming a mercantile connexion, if he *should* form one at all, with any other person than Mr. Macmunny.

Mrs. Wynne's obstinacy and departure for Italy, together with Solomon's resolution to obtain, by a bribe to her of increased fortune, her consent to the union with her daughter, had now determined him to launch into the troubled waters of commerce.

He frankly, therefore, stated his whole plan to the Glasgow merchant.

Solomon said, that of the hundred and fifty thousand pounds left to him by the old gentleman, provided Mr. Macmunny would place him, Solomon, at the head of a house in London, allow him one-third of the profits of that, and of the Glasgow firm, as well as of the foreign establishments,—a hundred thousand pounds should be placed in the concern.

In addition to this, Solomon stipulated that the names of the Messrs. Turnit should disappear from the firms. He did not like that

par nobile fratrum, because they had always been jealous of him, and the one at home not unfrequently insolent to him, nearly beyond his bearing. But in proposing to humble them by the erasure of their names from the firm, he had no intention to diminish their share of the business, or in any other way to affect their prospects.

He felt too much insulted not to inflict a little of retributive justice; but much too generous to do it at the expense of injury to the fortunes even of his enemies.

Solomon then said, in conclusion, that he wished (if Mr. Macmunny had no objections) that the firms of all the establishments, except that in London, should be Macmunny, Seesaw, and Co. In the latter place, as he, Solomon, was to direct the business there, he thought it was not too much to ask that the firm should be Seesaw, Macmunny, and Co.

"I should be ashamed," he concluded, "to take precedence of you even in this one in-

stance, were it not that general usage is in accordance with my proposition, and therefore exonerates you from the remotest implication of having done anything derogatory to your high mercantile status."

Solomon paused for a reply; and Mr. Macmunny, astonished at the cut and dry, almost peremptory proposals made by young Solomon, yet rejoiced in his inner man over every one of them.

1st. If he had not got all his heart's desire, he had got more than his most sanguine expectations could have anticipated, especially from the abyss into which they had sunk,—one hundred thousand pounds "into the concern."

2ndly. He was by no means displeased to have the rather upstart authority of the Turnits, as he considered it, lowered in the concern.

3rdly. A house in London was almost as good as another hundred thousand; for he could *draw* upon it in all cases of emergency.

4thly, He was proud to have his own name first in all the houses but the London one; and,

Lastly, He was still and better pleased to have Solomon's first there, as the world had run off with the idea that he had been left heir to half a million of money.

"There's nae end, therefore," said Mr. Macmunny to himself, "o' the extension that may be gi'en to our business, nor to the six months drafts I may pass on the London firm."

"I have only ae thing," he mentally continued, "to complain o'; and that is, that Solomon retains in his ain han's the odd fifty thousan'.

"As for my daughter, that's no' to be spoken o'; an' it's o' the less consequence, since I've gotten this siller *without* her, an' may still get a little *wi'* her."

Such was the imagery which, like a flash of lightning in a dark place, illumined, as by magic, the recently overcast mind of Mr. Macmunny.

Yet hear how the wily gentleman addressed young Solomon ; who was not quite so young, however, as the sagacious Mr. Macmunny took him to be.

“Ye’re aware, Mr. Seesaw,” (the Glasgow merchant intuitively, and for ever, abandoned the “Solomon,”) “Ye’re aware, that I can be but little prepared at ance to gi’e an answer to propositions, not only leadin’ to such extensive changes in the concern, but comin’ to me, frae ane that I have been sae lang in the habit o’ gi’en orders to.

“Ye’ll gi’e me, therefore, I houp, eight days to consider o’ your proposals ; an’ I’m sure they would be a’ the mair favourably entertained, if ye would consent to place the fifty thousan’ that ye mean to keep in ye’re ain hand, in the han’s o’ the firm. I *had* thought, Mr. Seesaw, that you an’ Nancy would ha’e made a partnership concern o’t, as weel as you an’ me ; but we’ll let that flea stick i’ the wa’.”

Solomon, like most men bolstered by prosperity, was now drawing up, more and more, to the exhibition of a certain haughtiness and independence, which even in their latent state had been so far occasionally displayed, as to make him many enemies, and to gain him few friends.

He thus, on the present occasion, rising up, addressed Mr. Macmunny, in reply to his last speech ; in which, short as it was, Solomon had detected a good deal more of the mercantile diplomatist, than of the candid man.

“Mr. Macmunny, though I may appear to you rather abruptly to have made my proposals, depend upon it they have not been rashly considered. The eight days you ask I cannot accord : this day, if you will allow me, I shall spend very happily with your family. To-morrow, I devote to my own. On the third day I shall be here *de retour* ; and if then you are not prepared to accede to my proposals, I must back instantly to

London, to conclude a not unfavourable one which has been made to me there.

“I have considered it my duty, as I have felt it to be my inclination, to consummate my own seven years’ connection with you, by making the proposals, which that most liberal,—and most partial of all friends,—my deceased patron,—has enabled me to do.

“But very far be it from me to ratify it, if there should, at the end of three days, be the remotest feeling in your mind, either that you are doing me a favour, or yourself an injury.

“As for your daughter,” concluded Solomon, smiling, “though we have never been married, yet are we for ever divorced; not because of her want of every thing amiable and accomplished, but because of a higher, a previous, and permit me, without the slightest disparagement, to add, a more willing engagement.

“As for the ‘fifty thousand,’ Mr. Macmunny,

the divorce between them and your firm is as complete as that between your daughter and me.

“ I should be sorry, on the very day on which my kind patron has made me free, to become, in a certain sense, by the placing of all I have at the disposal of others, a slave.”

Mr. Macmunny stood confounded and abashed.

He was ashamed of himself, and more than half ashamed to look Solomon in the face.

But a moment sufficed to merge every other feeling in the one dreadful apprehension that, by his imprudence and covetousness, he had given a fatal blast to his just budding hopes.

He soon rallied, however, as all prudent men do, whose habitual associations are so much more connected with the promotion of self-interest, than with the cultivation of the better and more noble feelings of the soul.

With much composure,—“ Well,” said Mr. Macmunny, “ your reasonin’s very muckle to the point.”

“ I have not *reasoned* the point,” said Solomon: “ I have only signified my determination upon it.”

“ Weel, weel, your determination,” Mr. Seesaw: “ ye ken I’m no’ sae glib at the use o’ proper words, as you.

“ What I mean to say is this; an’ it’s an auld commercial sayin’—‘ There’s nae time for strikin’ a bargain like the present.’ ”

“ But I have allowed you three days to consider of it,” replied Solomon, drily.

“ Hout, tout,” answered Mr. Macmunny, rising and taking Solomon by the hand, “ what’s the use atween real frien’s, that mean weel, o’ sae muckle ceremony an’ delay? It’s a bargain;” and here grasping Solomon’s right hand in his left, Mr. Macmunny, with *his* right hand came down with a thump upon Solomon’s captive one, that made the

sanctum ring again, as the Glasgow merchant repeated in an interrogatory form, the words. "It's a bargain, eh?"

"With all my heart," said Solomon, as he withdrew his hand, glowing with Mr. Macmunny's salutation, from the grasp of that gentleman.

At this stage of the question,—and knowing how entirely he could depend upon the stern inflexibility of Solomon's honour, for fulfilment of the stipulated terms, Mr. Macmunny lost all sense of dignity and decorum. He snapped the fingers of both hands, danced the highland fling, and, in very unwonted ecstasy, flung upon the ground a brown wig, to which the paucity of his grey hairs had obliged him latterly to have recourse.

Solomon thought he was crazed; but just at this auspicious, or inauspicious moment, in walked Mr. Turnit, senior.

Not aware of what had happened, he addressed Solomon with that distance,—not to

say air of condescension,—which is almost inherent in an official superior to his subordinate, unless it be put down by the *spirit* of that subordinate.

Solomon returned his late master's cold salutation with a very formal bow, and without saying to the distant query of "How do you do, Mr. Seesaw?" one word more than "Very well, I thank you, Sir."

Mr. Turnit had a countenance that would at any time have turned the milk of human kindness into the gall of bitterness; but it seemed peculiarly disposed, just now, to exercise its chemical influence, by still further chilling Solomon, who was not over-warmly disposed to him, and by precipitating from Mr. Macmunny's bile the small portion of honey which barely sweetened it.

"What," with intolerable effrontery of aspect, said Mr. Turnit to the senior of the firm, "What is the meaning of this buffoonery, in the presence of one of your clerks?"

Mr. Macmunny, very well understanding the relative position in which he stood to Mr. Turnit, coolly took up the brown wig, placed it on his bald caput, and, with great calmness, and almost dignity, requested Mr. Turnit to sit down.

“ Mr. Turnit,” said the senior of the firm, “ Mr. Seesaw is no longer a clerk ; but your superior, both in——”

Here Solomon, perceiving that the conversation was to bear upon himself, withdrew, assuring Mr. Macmunny that he should be with him at the dinner-hour.

What need to detail the conversation which passed between Mr. Macmunny and his partner. By the former all was told to the latter.

The conclusion was, that though Mr. Turnit's occupation had been heretofore to turn the cash, he was now fain to turn tail ; and not only did he agree to subscribe to all the conditions of the new partnership, but to

meet Solomon that evening at Mr. Macmunny's.

There his frigid impudence was thawed into bland servility. Solomon, from disliking, now only pitied him ; and he did all he could to raise him from the degraded position in which he had so contemptibly placed himself.

Thus it ever is with your self-important and inflated man.

He is daily called upon to pay to his superiors the hard-earned tribute of servility, as an *acquit* for the rude despotism exercised over all to whom his petty power can reach ; but Solomon being now *up*, and Mr. Turnit *down*, desired no longer to enjoy his triumph ; and did all he could to make Mr. Turnit forget his humiliating position.

Solomon passed a very pleasant evening with the Macmunnys ; all the necessary instructions were drawn out for the consummation of the partnership, and our hero started next morning for Ficklelegate.

There, he handsomely provided for the family, and especially for his mother. All that he gave was put beyond the control of Major Struttit, whom he did not very tenderly love.

Placed thus beyond the necessity of residing in Ficklegate, or of Major Struttit's continuing beneath his natural dignity in the unnatural post of exciseman, Mrs. Struttit contemplated a speedy departure from her sea-bathing quarters.

Their future plans were too important to be settled in one night; wherefore Solomon returned the next morning to Glasgow, without knowing what Mrs. Major Struttit would decide on, but under mutual and sincere assurances that all which it was important for either to know should be communicated by the other.

Solomon, though in the home of his youth, felt not at home in the house, as now conducted by the Major; for Mrs. Struttit, who had

ruled with such absolute sway the simple Mr. Seesaw, had been obliged to succumb to the militia officer.

The first-born of the family therefore left it, not with that regret that would have accorded with his heart's desire, but with a heavy foreboding that he was thenceforward to have little communion with his kith and kin.

He could shed, therefore, as he drove through the one, long, and dingy street of Ficklelegate, but one tear, and that was, for his mother. It was a tear, chiefly of affection, but partly of pity; for she was, alas! like many of her sex, a warm-hearted, but weak woman.

Solomon arrived in the evening at Glasgow. He dined once more with the Macmunnys, and next day all the proper and legal documents connected with the partnership being signed, he started with full powers to do what he pleased, in London, as senior of the new firm of Seesaw, Macmunny, and Co.

CHAPTER XIII.

The Story of Lord Beauclerk.

I have now a favour to ask, which very few readers are inclined to withhold, and that is, the favour of a little skip.

It is not so little either, for it carries them over an abyss of time of four years.

During this period, Solomon waxed exceeding great as a London merchant, and Eliza exceeding great as a Neapolitan belle.

The six-monthly letter passed between them; and Mrs. Wynne, more and more convinced of her daughter's irrevocable attachment, and of her firm adherence to her promise, not to marry against her mother's con-

sent, so far relaxed her restraint, as to allow Eliza herself to write the semi-annual communication.

One of these was to the following effect :—

“ My dear Friend,

“ We continue, as usual, well; though Mamma’s health is on gradual, but almost imperceptible decline.

“ Instead of a long letter from myself, I inclose the history of a very interesting person, whose acquaintance we have lately made, Lord Beauclerk.

“ With his wife, family, and sister, he has lately come from Switzerland, to pass two or three months at Naples.

“ His wife is a charming woman; and not less so either her mother, or Lord Beauclerk’s sister.

“ We are in daily intercourse; and I send you, what I’m sure it will prove to you, as it has done to me, the interesting story of Lord

Beauclerk, as written by himself, and given to me for perusal by his wife."

" I was ushered into the world as son and heir of the Marquis of Fancourt, amid the shouts, acclamations, and rejoicings, of a thousand of his vassals and dependants. He was one of the proudest peers of the proudest aristocracy in the world ; nor were his haughty bearing and lofty pretensions at all subdued by his alliance with my mother.

" She was a Roman Catholic lady of high birth and splendid fortune, having inherited, together with the rank of Countess of Charleville, in her own right, the noble castle and family domain from which her title was derived.

" Caressed, flattered, and indulged by all around me, and pronounced by every one to be a phenomenon, I was courted from my very

childhood as the rising star which was destined to shed new lustre upon two houses, each illustrious in itself, but deriving fresh *éclat* from its union with the other. Under such treatment, while I grew up what everybody called a delightful boy, I exhibited not a few symptoms of a proud and perverse one.

“The Marquis of Fancourt had married the Lady Charleville, not from any feeling of love, but simply that he might the more profusely indulge his passion for costly magnificence and extravagant display.

“Intoxicated by the contemplation of his own superiority, and engrossed by his efforts to maintain it, he interfered very little in the education of his son with either my indulgent mother, or her assistant, a fond and overweening aunt. They both encouraged in me a high tone, an imperious and impatient temper, and nothing less dignified they thought was suitable to the rank and prospects of the son and heir of the united houses of Fancourt and Charleville. There was no generous

quality with which they did not invest me, nor any vicious one to which they did not think I imparted a charm.

“ Thus prepared for a tutor, I was placed under the care of the Rev. Doctor Pliable. As I had really fair talents, I was not more than double the usual time in mastering the small portion of Greek, Latin, and Mathematics necessary to carry me to the University.

“ Doctor Pliable took quite Lady Charleville’s and my dear grand-mamma’s view of education.

“ ‘ It was to be formed,’ he said, ‘ with due regard at once to the habits of the pupil, and to his rank and fortune.’ The title in which by courtesy I rejoiced, was that of Lord Beauclerk.

“ ‘ Now the habits of Lord Beauclerk,’ continued Doctor Pliable, ‘ are those of exercise and amusement, unchecked by restraint, while his present rank and prospective fortune are of the highest, the most enviable order. Education is therefore of the less consequence.’

“ To my father’s entire satisfaction, Doctor Pliable demonstrated that rank and wealth

are as superior to learning as, to the admiration of the knight of the Verde Gaban, did the hero of La Mancha show knight errantry to be. As between the theory of Don Quixote, and that of the Reverend but aspiring Doctor, there was this only difference, that whereas the former included learning as *one* of the necessary accomplishments of a gallant knight, Doctor Pliable did not think it at all essential to a powerful nobleman.

“As Doctor Pliable was able to appeal to both my mother and my aunt for a coincidence of opinion with him, the whole question was settled.

“I was just enabled to read, therefore, with no inconsiderable doubt and hesitation, Homer and Virgil, to cross the pons asinorum, and rudely to digest an abridgment of Paley, when Doctor Pliable moved off to a bishopric, and I was entered of Trinity College, Cambridge.

“Very gorgeous preparations were made for my sojourn there.

“I had my tilbury, two grooms, and a valet ;

the best rooms in college were procured for me, and an excellent and abundant stock of wine was laid in.

“I came out with all the attraction of my freshman’s blue gown, gay with silver lace, and with all the distinction of my plain hat, proving me to be the son of a peer.

“I took the lead of the young men of my year;—not the lead of them in what are aptly termed the “severe” studies of the candidates for honours (for I had made up my mind, like most of my peers, to be one of the “*πολλοί*”), but the lead of them in their intoxicating course of gay and extravagant dissipation.

“I hunted during the season three times a week, and had my brother Nimrods ‘*to wine*’ with me afterwards. I went often to Newmarket, from which I generally returned with a soured disposition and a light purse. To ‘*read*’ in the morning, and in the University sense of the phrase, was now impossible.

“I *did* read, but it was a novel or the

the Sporting Magazine. I breakfasted late with some of my nocturnal debauchees, and before we could calculate and curse the losses settled on the previous night, my cab or saddled horses were at the gate.

“ I then drove or rode out under the alluring but ever disappointed hope of promoting exhilaration or dispelling ennui.

“ Alas! for Greek, Latin, Mathematics; I was forgetting them all.

“ I began to understand the character given to Alma Mater of being the most learned place in the world, and for this reason, that ‘a great deal of learning is yearly carried there, and none ever brought away.’ Not that *I* had added much to the University stock, but that the little I brought with me was undergoing a process of daily exhaustion.

“ In despair of proceeding with the men of my year in the lecture room, I determined to enjoy myself the two first years, and to get sufficiently ‘crammed’ the third, to enable me

to take the degree to which, by courtesy, I should then be entitled, of M.A. If any one be inclined to refer this word 'crammed' to the gross atmosphere of St. Giles's, rather than to the pure one of the University, I must inform him that not only is it a classical phrase, but a very appropriate one. A commoner may there be 'crammed' with learning enough to make him an A.B.—a nobleman with sufficient to make him an M.A. in as short a space of time as that occupied by one of your mountebank paper swallowers, while he gorges himself to the view of his admiring beholders, with a ream of that useful commodity, without which neither he nor your author can show off their fantastic tricks.

“What by the 'cramming' mode of application, and what by the courtesy of the examiners, I did contrive to take my degree of M.A. Lady Charleville exulted in my proficiency, the Marquis of Fancourt congratulated himself on his son's having affixed to his

title the two little magical letters of the alphabet, of which the union proclaimed him, by University accordance and etiquette, 'a gentleman and a scholar.' I had obtained this honour by the expenditure, not only of four thousand a-year, my nominal income, but by the incurring of at least five thousand pounds of debt. This the Marquis of Fancourt, as a matter of course, paid off, but, as I was surprised to hear, with some inconvenience to himself. I had proceeded on the assumption that the fortunes of my house were exhaustless. I was mistaken. Magnificent they really were, but my father had encroached upon them with such reckless extravagance, he had ministered them with so profuse, that I say not prodigal, a hand, as to involve his affairs in embarrassment, and even in confusion.

"When I returned home from the University, though every thing was still in keeping with Lord Fancourt's high rank, and with the lofty status he had assumed in society, I perceived

that it was by some effort this was accomplished, and that behind it there were symptoms of trouble and perplexity. But I was not disposed to dwell upon disagreeable realities. I was determined not to cloud present enjoyment by forebodings of future evil ; and I launched into every species of that gay and fashionable dissipation to which I thought myself called by birth and fortune, in a world fraught with blandishment and alluring temptation. Lady Charleville's health becoming about this time delicate, she was advised by her physicians to try the climate of Italy. My father, partly with a view to retrench, and partly in compliance with matrimonial duty, accompanied her to Naples. Here they took a small palace, and sat down at half the amount of their English expenditure. This, however, was sufficient there to keep my father in his favourite position of superiority in style and éclât over his peers.

“I had now gotten a seat in Parliament for

the county in which Lord Fancourt's estates chiefly lay. I was his only son, the prop of his fortunes, and the representative of the double line of ancestors whose wealth and titles were to centre in me. Every effort was made, therefore, to leave me in the possession of the means necessary to introduce me to the world in a manner suitable to my rank and importance. The establishment at Charleville Castle was to be kept up, as well as that of the mansion in town. I was urged by my father to think of arrangements for a speedy alliance. He considered that I had only to choose, and might command for my wife any woman in the land, uniting in her person the highest rank, the largest fortune, and the greatest share of beauty and accomplishment.

"I had just attained the age of twenty-two, with an agreeable person, an ardent constitution, and with a facility of appearing *toujours aimable, toujours gai*, I was courted by the *élite* of the *beau monde*, and moved with in-

toxicating rapidity in a sphere of dazzling splendour and endless excitement.

“ No assemblage was *comme il faut* without my presence, and that of the clique which followed in my train. Like a bright planet, I moved in the orbit of fashionable dissipation, and was attended by a number of sparkling satellites, known only by the erratic but burnished course of the luminary within whose attractive sphere they revolved.

“ The eye of beauty invited me to the waltz or the quadrille—figures that might have supplanted the graces were pleased to have my arm—the women all loved, and the men all envied me. My equipages were the most admired—my horses the best bred—my entertainments the most courted—my wines the most *recherchés*, and my liveries the most splendid in town. I lounged away my mornings in all the luxury of idle state; wrapped in my silk dressing-gown, I sipped my coffee, read a romance, luxuriated over Little’s poems,

received the idle and gay companions of the preceding night's debauch, and endeavoured to recruit my spirits with Lord Byron's beverage of hock and soda-water, till the operations of personal adjustment being performed by my valet, I sallied forth to listen to the busy and important nothings of the clubs. Sometimes I sauntered to the House of Commons, but it was only to enjoy a nap, or on some pressing occasion to give a vote. The fashionable hells, called clubs, became my favourite lounge, gaming my favourite pastime, till at length, so accustomed was I to a state of excitement and agitation, that every moment not spent in them became to me one of unsupportable languor and ennui. I seldom went to Charleville, even at a season when everybody, ranking as anybody, went out of town. When I did go to my country-seat, it was only after extravagant preparations had been made for every species of dissipation which distempered ingenuity could invent, or unlimited expense supply.

“ I got at length satiated with society, satiated with books, tired of myself, and discontented with every one around me. Almack’s and the Opera had lost their charms,—dinner parties at St. James’s became fastidious,—even *rouge et noir*, having ceased to excite, ceased to please; the canker-worm of discontent crept along side by side with every gratification of sense, while imagination sought in vain for what experience denied,—happiness founded on a solid basis.

I could not shake off the night-mare depression of spirits which cleaved to me as I awoke in the morning, and thought of the wretched day before me. I became, *malgré* my best exertions to have it otherwise—a *miserable Man*.

CHAPTER XIV.

Story of Lord Beauclerk continued.

“ WHILE thus whirling in a vortex of dissipation and reckless extravagance, plunging deeper and deeper into the gulf of ruin, and draining to the dregs the cup of infatuation, I received letters from my father, declaring that his creditors threatened to put the rentals of the estates under trust, and to cut him off with a wretched annuity. He urged me, while yet there was time,—while the tongue of public scandal as to the irretrievable embarrassment of his affairs was yet silent, to repair, as far as I could, the breach by marriage.

“ He informed me at the same time that my mother was in a very languid state, and that

the physicians feared consumption would at no distant day complete the work which had evidently commenced upon her decaying frame. There seemed, he said, to be something brooding upon her mind, as well as preying upon her body; and he adjured me, by the love I bore them both, to conclude with all speed a wealthy alliance, that I might come and see my drooping parent before her eyes should close in death.

“ This letter came upon me like a shock of electric fire. Never before had my father *condescended*, I may say, to disclose to me, in any specific way, either the nature or extent of his embarrassments.

“ The now distinct information received upon this subject, and the sombre tone of his warning as to my mother’s approaching dissolution, cast a gloom over my spirits which I had never before experienced. It was accompanied by vague apprehensions of calamity and disgrace. The accustomed objects of allurements swam

before my eyes, and produced giddiness, rather than gratification. I felt like a man who is about to have the drop knocked from under him, as he spends his last moments in time, and tries in vain to look into the dark future of eternity.

“ Then, again, all was feverish excitement. I flew to the gaming-table, and had desperation made by loss more desperate. I tried champagne: it drove me to madness; the Bagnio,—its orgies appeared to me little less than infernal. I came home at the dawn of day, with a sort of delirium tremens upon me, and, flinging myself on a couch, nature soon sank under an exhaustion so great, that it overpowered for the moment the turbulent passions within. I awoke to the reconsideration of my father’s letter in a state of comparative tranquillity, but it was the tranquillity of gloom and of pride foreboding humiliation, to which it was yet too haughty to realize to itself the transition.

“ I then thought of the plan suggested by

my father for averting the catastrophe, viz. a wealthy alliance.

“ There were several heiresses upon the town, any one of whom I might have had.

“ But there was one who was *not* an heiress, —one who in the midst of all the dissipation, gaiety, thoughtlessness, and vice of my career, had ever been present to my thoughts as the only being that could charm me away from the delusive pursuit of a happiness which I could never grasp.

“ Her name was Elenor. Of an old, though not a noble family, she had lost her father during the short but disastrous campaign of the Duke of York, and she now lived with her widowed mother in genteel but unostentatious style.

“ Her figure was lofty and graceful beyond any thing I ever saw,—her skin was of the most delicate white,—her hair pure auburn ; and her features, without being strictly beautiful in detail, were, as a whole, of the most dignified yet winning kind. Her seriousness was

all dignity,—her placidity all intelligence,—
and her smile, all enchantment.

“I had courted her acquaintance with designs the most culpable, but my effrontery stood abashed in her presence,—my ingenuity found no plea for the remotest familiarity.

“Libertinism was obliged to feign, if it could not feel, virtuous sentiment where Elenor was; and bold indeed must have been the man who could have polluted her ears by any expression of indecorous levity.

“Under these circumstances, I was constrained to make my advances with a caution and circumspection, rendered only the greater, in consequence of the distance which obtained between us in rank and fortune.

“Elenor’s good sense and discrimination soon taught her that intimacy with me was dangerous; and she entertained my attentions, which almost, but never actually, amounted to a suit, with a distance, chastened by scarce an approximation, on her part, to familiarity.

“In time, the very failure of my dishonour-

able intentions engendered in me feelings of an opposite tendency, and, but for worldly considerations, I should have been happy to marry the woman who, if I could, I would have betrayed.

“ I was aware, however, not only of the impossibility of getting my father’s consent to such a match, but that the mere suspicion of my harbouring desire to marry a woman, in his estimation, so entirely beneath me, would alienate him from me for ever.

“ My dishonourable passion for Elenor was quenched by her own virtue, while the flame of honourable love was kept under by the terror of parental displeasure, by the exciting allurements of dissipation, and *perhaps* by the unconquerable disdain which high rank and pure blood entertain for even dignity, chastity, and loveliness like Elenor’s, unless accompanied by those adventitious but intoxicating adjuncts.

“ I began to consider, therefore, in earnest, the necessity of taking some formal and decided step toward completing a matrimonial arrange-

ment which should, if not emancipate the other branches of the family from pecuniary thralldom, at least spare me the unbearable disgrace of sudden precipitation from the highest circles of fashion, to the mediocre ranks of noble but pauper aspirants to éclât.

“There was a latent something, I confess, within me, which revolted at the idea of the duplicity and deception I must practise before I could offer myself as the wealthy heir of two princely fortunes, while the revenues of both (to say nothing of my own inextricable embarrassment) were anticipated during the lifetime of my father certainly, and in all probability during mine.

“ I had raised such enormous sums of money from Jews, and on terms so overwhelmingly ruinous upon the contingency of my father’s death, that I saw no chance, unless I should live to the age of Methuselah, of ever repaying them.

“ But compunctions like these I have never

known to hold out long against the battering-ram of necessity.

“He breaks down every rampart of principle, and introducing to the strong holds of the understanding and the heart his legions of sophistry, he routs, discomfits, or destroys the feeble train-bands of honour, truth, integrity, and virtue.

“Lord Newman, I was assured, was a man after my father’s own heart, not because of his ancient nobility, but because, like Jephthah, he had only one daughter (she rich) and no more.

“Having made himself useful to government, Lord Newman was raised to the peerage ; and having no heirs male, the patent of his nobility conveyed the title of Baroness as well as his estates to the female line.

“According to all probability, they were to descend to his only daughter, and to the heirs of her body lawfully begotten.

“Lord Newman looked up to my father as most parvenus do to high aristocrats, and he

was willing, nay anxious, to sell his daughter, title, estates and all, for the honour of an alliance with the families of the Marquis of Fancourt and of Lady Charleville.

“ My father, on the other hand, was not displeased to receive a noble patrimony for his son at the hands of a man upon whom he could still look down with contempt, and *by* whom he knew that he should ever be looked up to with awe.

“ I made my approaches to Lord Newman's daughter, the Lady Prudentia, quite in business style.

“ I was received in the same way. Letters passed to and from London and Naples with unceasing rapidity, till all things being duly arranged for a nuptial consummation, the happy day was fixed.

“ I moved about as I best might with Lady Prudentia, she being chaperoned, though thirty-five, by an aunt of double her age. Carriages were ordered,—horses bought,—jewellery and wedding attire provided,—the

mansion in town was decorated and repaired, and Castle Charleville, with its noble park and gardens in the country, was splendidly decorated for our reception during the honeymoon.

“ Pending the six months occupied in these preliminaries, I had weekly accounts of my mother’s growing indisposition, and of the little hope of her surviving another winter.

“ It was arranged that we should visit her in the autumn.

CHAPTER XV.

Story of Lord Beauclerk continued.

“ I NEED not say that my intended marriage to Lady Prudentia was not one of love.

“ It was *strictly* one of convenience. By the world it was considered a great match for both parties : for her, because of her alliance with so splendid a connexion as mine ; and for me, because, *malgré moi*, people began to talk of my embarrassments.

“ Certain now of fortune, I plunged every day deeper into expense and excitement ; till I became such a martyr to the necessity for the latter, that everything around me which did not minister it seemed tame, stupid, intolerable.

“ My moments of merriment were, more pro-

perly speaking, moments of phrenzy ; my solitary ones of tedium insupportable.

“ Even my short and feverish slumbers were intolerable, because broken in upon by waking fits, when all around was dark and still as the grave.

“ I blamed, sometimes cursed my nature, because not more capable of enjoyment ; and I remonstrated with my Maker, for that, being omnipotent, he had left me a prey to depression of spirits, and languor of frame.

“ The company of Lady Prudentia, whose name was too indicative of her character, had become tiresome, even to nausea, already ; and I often escaped from her, in defiance of all the rules of decorum and etiquette.

“ Elenor I had never dared to see, since rumour had spread the news of my intended marriage to another ; and I began to think of her only as of something more than human, in whose tranquil and dignified presence the agitated spirit of a wretch like myself could find no rest.

“ On making my usual morning call one day

at Lord Newman's, I was surprised to be told, for the first time, that Lady Prudentia was not at home.

“ ‘Is Lord Newman within,’ said I?

“ ‘Yes, my Lord,’ replied the servant; ‘but he is very particularly engaged, and desired not to be interrupted by any one.’

“ I could not conceive the reason for answers so extraordinary at that door, which had ever been wont to fly open before I could announce my arrival at it.

“ Lost in amazement and conjecture, I came away, scarcely crediting the evidence of my own senses.

“ I seldom sought home after leaving it till the following morning, unless I had to dress for dinner. When I returned, near daybreak, from my usual haunts of dissipation, I found a note on my table from Lord Newman, of which the following is a copy :—

“ ‘MY LORD,

“ ‘I am sorry to inform you, that rumours of a very unpleasant kind, in which you are

deeply concerned, have reached me, this morning, from the Continent. They come so well authenticated, that, all mysterious as they are, I cannot doubt their accuracy.

“ ‘ Permit me to say, that until further light be thrown on the subject, I have thought it due at once to my daughter and to myself, to suspend the nearly concluded arrangements between you and her.

“ ‘ Unpleasant as it is to my feelings, I am under the necessity of requesting that you will consider our intercourse, for the present, as at an end. Circumstances may, and I hope they will, give a different aspect to affairs in a short time; and then, perhaps, that intimacy may be resumed, which for a season must cease.

“ ‘ I have the honour to be, MY LORD,

“ ‘ Your most obedient servant,

“ ‘ NEWMAN.’

“ This letter filled me with dread and amazement. I concluded that the creditors of my father had carried their threat into execution,

and that the embarrassments of the family, become thus matter of notoriety, Lord Newman and Lady Prudentia were off the match.

“Looking at the debts and incumbrances more immediately my own, I saw nothing but infamy, poverty, and a prison in their train. I already fancied myself besieged by bailiffs, carried off, *vi et armis*, to an attic in the Bench; and lingering out a life of misery at the mercy of relentless creditors.

“But what were these feelings, to the dismay which filled my breast, as I read, with bewildered eyes, and senses shuddering on the brink of bereavement, the following letter from one I was now no longer to call father :—

“SIR,

“It is my duty to inform you (under what feelings you can scarcely require to be told) that you are *not my son*. Your mother, to relieve what she calls her conscience, on her death-bed, has laid open a history of iniquity

and deception practised on me, which humanity shudders to think of, and which, having already broken my proud heart, will assuredly bring my grey hairs with sorrow to the grave.

“The particulars of the horrid deed of deception it is unnecessary to detail. For me to do so would be impossible. Suffice it to say, that there is not room for the shadow of a doubt, that you are at once a bastard and a beggar.

“Profligate and, beyond all bounds, extravagant as has been your career, I have no desire, by vituperation of your past conduct, to aggravate the wretched transition to which you are now doomed; but I *must* inform you, that on the very day on which you receive this, the hand of the law will be laid upon everything it can touch of mine, and all it can reach of yours. Nor is it possible for me, *now* myself, a pauper, to render any assistance to one of whom I am merely the supposititious father. You must yourself be the judge, whether, if I had even

been your real parent, your conduct has been such as would have afforded me, under my present trial, any satisfaction.

“‘Farewell; save what you can from the grasp of your creditors, and if you wish to preserve your personal liberty, lose not a moment in quitting England.

“‘FANCOURT.’

“My first impression, on reading this letter, was that my father was mad; the next that I was mad myself.

“My brain whirled in an eddy of bewilderment and perplexity. The dread of a prison, with all its appalling horrors, stared me in the face, with so much of reality, that, as in the case of a frightful dream, I was awakened from my stupor by the awful intensity of my sufferings.

“Finding, when I *did* awake from it, that I was in no *dream*, I hastily packed up the portable things of value in my possession, plate, jewellery, &c.

“I then selected the best of my wardrobe,

and drew a cheque for the last sous in the hands of my banker, I ordered a hackney coach, and flung myself into it, desiring to be driven to Piccadilly. I there transferred myself and my luggage to a travelling-carriage, and was presently posting, as fast as four horses could carry me, to Dover.

“ I sat, as I travelled, in a state of bewilderment.

“ I now thought of the height from which I had fallen, and anon of the scorn, the calumny, the triumph, which were perhaps, at that moment, occupying, the tongues of fashionable malice, fraught with the poison of asps.

“ Then I pictured to myself bailiffs and creditors dismantling the splendid mansion I had left.

“ I reflected upon the thousands I had squandered, and the tens of thousands I had lost at play.

“ The accuser, conscience, pressed home his charges of innocence betrayed, and of happi-

ness made wretched; while the infamy of my birth, the dark aspect of my future prospects, and the totally undetermined nature of my present plans, all crowded upon me in imagery so fearfully grouped, or so rapidly successive that I felt every moment as if the fever of despair would take possession of my brain, and drive me to the last act of insanity.

“ With such thoughts and feelings, I reached Dover. Fearing now every footstep, while I remained in England, I passed from my carriage to the packet, without even stopping to take refreshment.

“ The sails being hoisted, and the wind fair, I began to breathe. The first experience of subdued feeling came over me, as I viewed the diminishing objects of that land, from which I was now a banished man. My next alleviation was that there was nobody on board the packet who knew me; and my last source of consolation was, that though doomed to infamy and disgrace, I was not to move about, in my humiliation, a

spectacle to gratify the malice of those who had known and envied me in my prosperity.

“ On arrival at Calais, I set off instantly for Paris; and there, taking possession of a small suite of rooms, in an obscure hotel, I laid me down to take the first repose I had been able to find since I left London, on the day on which I received the letter of him I can no longer call father.

“ I slept for twelve hours without intermission. I then had a warm bath, and dressed. Although unable to tell how the change of fortune had taken place, I was pleased to find the terrible agitation of the last three days succeeded, if not by tranquillity, at least by comparative calmness and resignation.

“ But anon the mystery of my mother's reproach, of my reputed father's dishonour, and of my own ignominious birth, catastrophes all produced by one fatal cause, a parent's aberration, came upon me like an overwhelming shock, shutting out every hope of peace till something

certain and known on the subject should take place of apprehension and conjecture, a thousand times worse than the worst reality.

“ I resolved to set out incognito for Naples, and to ascertain upon the spot where the fatal secret had been made public, at least the principal points of a story so fraught to me with awful interest.

“ Scarcely had I rested a week in Paris, when I carried my intention into effect.

“ Sad, cheerless, long was the journey. It was that of a son travelling to the scene of his mother's public disgrace to hear the history of her secret dishonour ; of a nobleman stripped of his honours, upon an inquiry into *who* was his father, or if he had any father at all ; of a ruined rake saturated with enjoyment, the remembrance of which was now nauseous to him ; of an outcast from the society which he had long (egregious fool !) fancied he adorned ; of a man whose chief consolation it was to find himself *alone* in the world.

“ Long as the journey was, I did, however, reach the end of it.

“ The first thing of which I heard was my mother’s death ; the next of my reputed father’s departure, nobody knew whither.

“ After long, patient, and minute inquiry, which was greatly impeded by my determination to remain unknown to every human being in Naples, I learnt the following particulars of my mother’s sad and fearful history.

CHAPTER XV.

Story of Lord Beauclerk, continued.

“ I HAVE remarked that Lady Charleville was of the Catholic persuasion.

“ She had been trained by her parents in all the superstitions, and in many of the ascetic privations, of that faith.

“ Left, by the premature death of her father and mother, to be at an early age her own mistress, she cultivated much the society of Priests, and established in her domain, on the site of a ruined priory, a small convent, or receptacle for such devotional Monks as chose to take up their abode there. Among these, was Father Anselmo, remarkable alike for the manly beauty of his person, for the severity of his personal discipline, and for the extent of his erudition.

“ His theological learning was exceeded only by his practical devotion ; and he was the more the object of respect and admiration, that he had only attained his twenty-fifth year. A native of Italy, he had received the early part of his education at Florence ; thence he went to Rome ; and finished by spending two years at Salamanca.

“ At all those places he had distinguished himself alike for his application, and for the rigid severity of his deportment.

“ Desirous of visiting England, he procured letters of introduction from the Duke of Ossuna to my mother ; and soon afterwards, to the delight of all the good Catholics in the neighbourhood, he took up his abode at the Priory.

“ My mother selected him for her Father Confessor, and was initiated by him into the mystical theology of the Fathers, and into many of the dark superstitions of the tenth and eleventh centuries.

“ But as Father Anselmo was only one of *many* holy men, all intimate with my mother ;

as her aunt and sister lived constantly with her; as, from her high rank and devotional habits, she was above all suspicion; and as, if such had been awakened, Father Anselmo was the last man upon whom it would have fallen; not a conjecture was formed, not a whisper transpired, of any impropriety.

“Quite the reverse. Father Anselmo and Lady Charleville were the praise and admiration even of the Protestant families in the neighbourhood of her magnificent abode.

“Arrangements were at this time going forward for an alliance between the Marquis of Fancourt and my mother.

“That alliance took place. Father Anselmo suddenly took his departure for Florence; and I, born just a fortnight within my time, was hailed as the son and heir of the two noble houses united by this marriage.

“Never, to all appearance, was there a happier pair than Lord Fancourt and my mother; never, during the twenty-two years

which they lived together, did the breath of calumny or even of suspicion dare to taint my mother's fair fame; nor could malice itself object to Lord Fancourt that he was not a kind, amiable, and indulgent husband.

"So much for what I knew before I reached Naples. The rest I learned there.

"Father Anselmo, after leaving the Priory, established himself at the monastery of which he had before been an inmate.

"His usual grave deportment and unimpeachable manners soon rendered him as conspicuous and respected as ever.

"About four years after his return, it was remarked that he was very assiduous in his visits to an old lady, to whose care he had confided a beautiful girl, five years of age.

"This girl, he alleged, was an adopted orphan. Her name was Ophelia, and his tender care of her, as well as the pains he took to see her properly educated and brought up, earned for him an increased reputation for pious philanthropy.

“ For eighteen years did Father Anselmo pursue the even tenour of his way, increasing each succeeding one his reputation for piety and learning.

“ Pilgrims from France, Spain, Portugal, and all parts of Italy, flocked to his confessional. The door of his cell was beset by the poor, the lame, the blind, and the aged, desiring that they might be permitted to touch the hem of his garment.

“ Of all the conventuals, Father Anselmo was ever first on his knees before the altar at matins, with his large black rosary and crucifix in his hand.

“ One morning, the first in eighteen years, to the astonishment of his monastic brethren, he was absent. They were certain that nothing but the most alarming illness could keep him from his devotions ; and, going, by simultaneous consent, to the door of his cell, they gently knocked, and inquired if anything was the matter.

“ No answer was returned.

“ They knocked louder, and louder still ; and still they received no reply. Alarmed beyond measure, the abbot ordered the door to be forced,—when, oh ! horror unspeakable, Father Anselmo was found, already stiff, and weltering in his gore, lying at the shrine of his Saint.

“ He had grasped, in the agony of death, his well-known crucifix in his hand. A stiletto, plunged to the hilt in his side, gave evidence of the manner of his death, while the feeble taper which burned by the image of his saint shed its flickering light upon the ghastly corpse, and upon the varied expressions of horror, the most intense, which sat upon the countenances of the Monks.

“ For a moment it was supposed that Father Anselmo must himself have committed the awful deed ; and this supposition, difficult of credence as it was, seemed to receive some confirmation from the fact, not only of his door being locked, but of every thing in his cell appearing to be in perfect order.



The Death of a Priest



“The momentary belief that it was *possible* the holy man should have committed such a deed was soon overturned by facts the most indisputable.

“After diligent search for the key of the door of his cell, it was not to be found.

“Neither were the keys of a large wooden chest, in which he kept the reliques and jewels, which had been brought to him as offerings of respect by those who attended his confessional. On farther search, the keys of a large oaken escrutoire, in which he kept his numerous papers, were also missing. The locks of these depositories being forced, it was found that every thing valuable, as well as every shred of paper, was gone.

“It was now evident that whatever else might have moved the murderer to his deed of atrocity, pillage was one object of it, and the possession of Father Anselmo's papers another

“All Florence was thrown into consternation by the event.

“Every thing that *could* be done by the authorities to discover the murderer was done, but without success.

“The assassin eluded detection ; and the whole affair remained a mystery of darkness, over which nor time nor circumstance cast a single ray of light.

“Soon after the arrival at Naples of Lord Fancourt and my mother, she became desirous of drawing closer than ever the bonds of her connexion with the Romish Church.

“She was visited by all the ecclesiastical dignitaries of the place ; and as Lord Fancourt cared nothing about religion, he left my mother to do in this respect as she pleased. He was content with the *éclat* of receiving a cardinal or a bishop as his guest ; and professed that he did not wonder my mother should like their society, for they were very excellent and polished personages.

“Among the most frequent visitors at the palazzo of Lord Fancourt was my mother's

confessor. He was a man of erect and noble mien, of great polish and much learning, and he moved in the highest circles of Italian society. He was about fifty years of age, a native of Spain, and his name was Canonigo Vimiera.

“Passing over the events of the four years’ sojourn of my mother at Naples, as not important to my present narrative, all I have to say respecting them is that she waxed feebler in frame, and grew more and more depressed in spirits.

“It was evident she was brooding over some secret source of misery, of which the effects were observable by all. The cause was yet concealed within her own bosom, and that of her confessor, Vimiera.

“This man two years before my mother’s death, heard from her own lips at the confessional, what he already knew, the secret of her infidelity to her husband. The scrupulous canon then refused her absolution, unless she should make a public declaration of her guilt.

“ He had so entangled her in the meshes of his spiritual sorcery that she could not disengage herself from them.

“ She felt assured that the salvation of her soul depended on absolution from Canonigo Vimiera. She confessed to him, not only that *I* was the son of the murdered Father Anselmo, but that she had had a daughter by him six months before her marriage to Lord Fancourt. That daughter was Anselmo's supposititious orphan, my own sister, Ophelia.

“ With such terrors did the villanous Canon beset my mother, and such difficulty had he in bringing her to the shame of an open confession, that for two years she lingered under the iron rule of his fiendish despotism, and yet could not be brought to his point.

“ Wonder of wonders, that there should be in the world such a rack as that of the confessional upon which to break the affrighted soul, till one human being is enabled to wring from another, and then force that other to give to the world, as the price of

absolution, secrets too dark for any eye but that of infinite mercy.

“Yet thus was my poor mother’s secret wrung from her soul. Her Confessor assembled in Lord Fancourt’s house two Bishops, a Member of the Holy Office of Madrid then at Naples, two Notaries, my father, and the principal servants of the establishment.

“The sombre apartment was lit with wax tapers; the walls were covered with rich Gobelin tapestry, and adorned with pictures of the best Italian masters.

“My dying mother, pale as a ghost, with eyes sinking fast into the dimness of death, and lips livid, and trembling as she spoke, unbosomed to the horror-stricken assembly the whole secret of her ignominy,—of Lord Fancourt’s dishonour,—and of my ruin and shame. She then sank back upon her pillow, in a state of complete insensibility, which those present supposed was death.

“It was not. She had one trial more to undergo on this side of the grave.

“ A few days after the confession, Vimiera presented himself in her room ; and, being left alone with her, as she reclined on the sofa, put into her hand a sealed packet. He desired she should peruse it after he was gone, and promised to see her on the morrow.

“ So saying, he took his departure. My mother rang the bell, and desired she might not be disturbed for an hour.

“ On opening the packet, she read thus :—

“ ‘ I saw you, unseen *by* you, while yet the bloom of beauty and of innocence were rife upon your cheek. I more than loved : my head reeled, and my heart was one flame of burning desire. Anselmo came, took up his abode at the priory, won your heart, seduced your innocence, and became the father of your two children. Jealousy, hatred, rancour the most deadly, took possession of my inner man ; and I stood pledged by a terrible, desperate oath, never to rest till glutted with revenge. I followed Anselmo to Florence : I waited

eighteen years for an opportunity; but I murdered him at last. His jewels became mine; and with them, through Jew agents in London, I have ruined, and hope soon to see imprisoned for life, your son.

“Anselmo’s papers, your letters, are all in my possession.

“I have tried to seduce your daughter, but failed.

“I then determined to ruin you. How far I have succeeded, you are the best judge.

“From henceforth you see me no more; and when your eyes close in death, may your last thoughts be of Anselmo murdered, because he dared to thwart *me*. He knew well my aspirations after you, though you did not.

“ ‘ CANONIGO VIMIERA.’

“It was enough. The paper dropped from my mother’s hand; and when Lord Fancourt shortly after entered the apartment, his wife lay a broken-hearted corpse, with the

letter of the villainous murderer by her side. The husband had long been prepared for the catastrophe of his wife's death; and now that the secret of his dishonour was matter of notoriety, he perhaps desired it.

“ His first feeling, therefore, was to seize Vimiera's confession of his crime, and hasten with it to the authorities. But Vimiera had fled, without leaving a trace behind by which he could be pursued.

“ My mother was buried with all possible privacy; the household establishment was disbanded; Lord Fancourt embarked in a polacca for the Archipelago; and all this occurred within little more than three weeks.

“ The reports from which I collected the foregoing particulars were just beginning to lose their novelty in the city, where intrigue is so common, that even a history so disastrous as my mother's could not long survive in the memory of the dissipated and volatile Neapolitans.

CHAPTER XVI.

Story of Lord Beauclerk, continued.

“NEVER; perhaps, was a change of character more complete wrought out by mere human means than that which was produced in me, as I reflected on the extraordinary events of my life, and pondered over the tragical details which it had been my business for the last fortnight to collect.

“*Pride*, which was the very essence of my former character, was now humbled to the dust.

“Ambition to be ‘*un homme distingué*,’ which sat *next* to pride in my heart, was superseded now by an almost *painful* desire for obscurity.

“I felt, in the presence even of absolute

strangers, as if every one of them could discern the brand of bastardy on my forehead.

“ Extravagance and show were exchanged for frugality and privacy ; and so great, for some weeks, had been my excitement, that its own violence quenched it, leaving in its place a sombre, meditative principle, which, rivetting thought upon subjects of most solemn import, gave me occupation so constant, that any extraneous interruption of it seemed to be impertinent, or was felt to be unwelcome.

“ I was nauseated by every view I could take of my past life, and I found experimentally that I was getting into a better train of thought and feeling, than any in which I had been for years.

“ From a rake I was *almost* transformed to a philosopher. I believe that the lessons of philosophy read in the school of personal experience outweigh in one month all the theoretical impressions that can be made upon the mind in ten years.

“ Having learnt all that I desired to know at

Naples, and much more than my worst anticipations had led me to fear, I put on a suit of deep mourning for my unfortunate parent deceased, and prepared to leave that splendid abode of elegance and vice.

“ On estimating the valuables I had brought with me from London, I found that they amounted to five-and-twenty thousand pounds. I disposed of them, and deposited the money with a Neapolitan banker, under the name which I determined henceforth to assume.

“ I should have felt now a completely isolated being in the world, had not nature proclaimed in my breast, and in a tone of authority, which I had neither the power nor the desire to dispute—*you have a sister*. ‘ Yes,’ I added, responding to the call from within of a newly-created affection in my soul; ‘ and perhaps that sister is destined still to be the victim of the murderer of one of my parents.’

“ My heart throbbed with a fervour unfelt before; and my pulse beat in corroboration of the

vital warmth of my blood as it circulated from that centre of life through all my veins.

“ Kneeling, solemnly, for the first time in my life, before that God whom with so high a hand I had offended, I implored his forgiveness of the past, and prayed him to conduct me to the presence of that sister, whose only protector in life, next to himself, I was.

“ Fortified by the courage of virtuous affection, the first of the kind I had ever experienced, I left Naples, determined to trace, if possible, my sister, and resolved, if necessary, to follow her to the world's end. A faint hope flitted before me, as I thought I *might* thus chance to cross the murderer in his path.

“ I soon reached Florence. Two months did I spend there in vain endeavours to trace the abode of my sister Ophelia, or learn anything of her fortunes. I began to despair of ever hearing of her more, and so strong an affection for her had in the mean time sprung up in my bosom, that I felt not as if I were in search of one whom I had never yet seen

but of one endeared to me by every tie of hallowed sympathy from the cradle.

“It was in vain that I enquired at the convents for the orphan *protégé* of the murdered Father Anselmo. It was now ten years since that murder had taken place; and though all remembered Father Anselmo, and some the beautiful Ophelia, yet the story of the one was told as the fearful legend of a century past, and that of the other was enveloped in total mystery. The lady under whose charge she was had disappeared soon after the murder of Anselmo, but whither gone, or where now to be found, no one could tell.

“One morning as I was loitering in the cloisters of a convent in a state of great despondency, and with evident symptoms of dejection upon my countenance, I was saluted by a Capuchin friar, of the most benevolent aspect, I think, I ever beheld. His features were of the cast of those of the highest Roman nobility; a small and dimpled mouth,

a nose *very* slightly aquiline, dark and most expressive eyes, with a fine bold forehead, and a silver beard falling upon his chest, were the prominent marks of the venerable man. He was tall, slender, and slightly bent forward. It might either have been the effect of age, or of a benevolence ever ready to stoop down to serve others. I took him to be seventy-five. His dress was a long robe of coarse sackcloth, girded round the waist with two strong cords, to which were appended tassels of the same material, and reaching almost to the lacing of his sandals, which he wore without stockings.

“ ‘Son,’ said he to me, ‘you seem much dejected. You are a stranger, too: is there anything in which you can command the services of an old man, anxious to do all the good he can upon the stage of human misery, before he makes his exit from it?’

“ These words were accompanied by a manner so gracious, and uttered in a voice so sonorous, that I could have pressed the venerable anchorite to my heart.

“ He had made his way to the innermost recesses of it; and so assured was I at once of his simplicity and sincerity, that I opened to him the whole secret of Anselmo’s villany, and of the object of my sojourn in Florence.

“ ‘ My son,’ said he, ‘ I did not know that you were the ill-starred youth so deeply interested in the fatal tragedy you have rehearsed; but all the rest I have known by secret communications from Naples for some days. It is a bloody page in the history of the church; and every means in her power will be taken to hush up the dreadful tale. Beware how you bruit it; beware still more of its being known that you are Ophelia’s brother.

“ The influence of Vimeira here is yet enormous. But this is no place for the discussion of such subjects. I will call at your hotel to-morrow, at noon; and I hope then to carry you such tidings as may make my visit not unwelcome. Farewell: to-morrow, at noon.’

“ So saying, my venerable friend glided off under one of the opposite cloisters, leaving me, for the first time, with a ray of hope that I should yet be able to trace my beloved sister, and with the confirmed suspicion that the atrocious assassin had not yet relinquished his persecution of her.

CHAPTER XVI.

Story of Lord Beauchlerk concluded.

“ PUNCTUAL to his appointed hour of twelve, the Capuchin arrived, and introduced himself to me as Father Clementi. After greeting me with his benediction, he looked suspiciously around, as if to satisfy himself that there was not a possibility of our being overheard. Then drawing his chair close to mine, he addressed me thus, in a very low tone of voice :—

“ ‘ My son, all may yet be well; but the utmost vigilance, care, and secrecy, especially as to your own movements, are necessary. Vimeira has his spies in every direction. The Jews who lent you money in London have sent to his agents a minute description of your person; they *anticipated*

your going to Naples, and it appears to me little short of a miracle that you escaped detection there. It is true you have done nothing for which the laws of this country would interfere with you. You have only contracted debts in England, and there are hundreds of your companions here under similar circumstances. But you have in Vimiera a far more formidable enemy to fear than the laws of Italy.

“ ‘He has performed many desperate services to the holy office of the inquisition. He has great influence at the Vatican, and the present anxiety of the church is not half so much to punish as to conceal his delinquency. You have everything, in short, to fear from him. But listen—I last night saw the lady under whose charge your sister has been since she was five years of age. She is not less devotedly attached to Ophelia than Ophelia to her. Nothing short of a protection so high as that extended to her by the Abbess of Santa

Rosa could have saved her from the villainous intrigues of the man-monster Vimeira. But even the *Abbess* despaired, at length, of being able to protect her; and two months ago she committed her to the charge of a general officer's widow, long known to her, and who with her daughter, at the time, was on a tour to the Swiss Cantons. The name under which the lady travels is Madame Steinfort, and the Abbess supposes she may now be residing at or about Geneva. She can tell no more, for the attempt to keep up any correspondence with Ophelia might have been fatal to both.

“ ‘ Now, my son, hear my advice, and listen to it as to that of one whom experience has *enabled* to advise, and who knows that of every advice given here he must give an account hereafter. You speak French well;—procure for yourself the dress of a French courier, and under pretext of having letters to send to Berne, I will procure for you a passport which

will take you there. But, beware of talking much or of forming any acquaintance on the way. Let your wardrobe be as coarse and portable as possible. Purchase for yourself a mule. Take not a scrap of paper with you, but the sealed packet, which I shall deliver to you. If you reach Berne, as I hope you will, without interruption, you may then consider yourself safe,—not before.

“ ‘Prosecute your inquiries after your sister with as much secrecy as possible ;—remove to some quiet retreat in Switzerland, and there abide for a season. You cannot return to England, and I know not any Catholic country on the Continent in which you would be safe.

“ ‘If you do not choose to remain in Switzerland, you can retire to some of the Protestant States in Germany, and there, though in banishment, you may at least live in safety. Farewell.

“ ‘This evening I will send you the passport and the letter ; and remain not here

one hour after you receive them. Go, make your preparations, and the blessing of God be with you.' So saying, the venerable old man gave me an affectionate embrace and left me.

"I felt not more bound by ties of the deep-gratitude to Father Clementi for his opportune assistance and advice, than shocked to think a man like Vimeira should be so protected, and amazed at the perils from which I had unconsciously escaped.

"But this was no time for reflection. I lost not a moment in making the arrangements suggested by the amiable Capuchin. My passport and his letter came as he had promised they should ; and, arrayed in a very lowly garb, I set out on my mule, praying that I might encounter no such perilous adventure as the first which beset Gil Blas. I was well armed, and carried only money enough to take me to the end of my journey.

"I passed the first night at the distance of two stages from Florence. All was well. I

saw my mule provided with provender, betook me to a small attic, put my purse under my pillow, and shortly after daybreak of the next morning I was again wending my way toward Switzerland.

“The only person of real interest to me in the world was there, and that person I had never yet seen. All the rest was a blank. I had not, it is true, forgotten Ellenor; but, while I lingered with fond recollection upon her dignified character, her unsullied purity, and her beautiful person, it was with the same feelings, only more intense, as those under which I viewed myself as now for ever cut off from intercourse with all who had known me as the son and heir of Lord Fancourt.

“As I drew to the end of my second day’s journey, and had seen from a slight eminence the hostelry at which I was to bivouac for the night, I perceived at a short distance before me a carriage coming at a rapid pace along the

road. As it skirted the borders of a small wood, there rushed out from behind the trees five ruffians armed with blunderbusses and pistols. They were all masked, and two of them riding up to the postillion, stopped the carriage, while the other three, two at one window, and one at another, threatened the party within.

“There were two servants, a man and woman, behind the carriage. The man fired with such effect, that one of the assassins fell from his horse. Another, perceiving this, fired at the servant, while a third, observing me close upon the carriage, rode a few paces before it, and, discharging a pistol at me, wounded me slightly in the left arm.

“I returned the shot, and the miscreant fell.

“Riding up to the carriage, I then fired a second barrel at him who seemed to be the leader of the gang. He also dropped; and there being now only two left, they rode off as fast as they could.

“In a moment they were out of sight.

“What a scene of blood produced in the space of two short minutes! It was certainly not more than that time in the acting. Of the brigands, three lay dead: the servant was badly, I slightly, wounded; and one of the three ladies in the carriage, leaning on the back of it, was bleeding profusely. The villain who fell by my last shot had, at the very moment of receiving it, fired into the carriage.

“My first step was to send the postilion, who remained uninjured, back to the inn for medical and other assistance; my next, to attend to the wounded female.

“Gracious heaven! what was it I saw? The mother of Ellenor bleeding in her daughter’s arms!

“Petrified by the spectacle, yet bewildered by what seemed so like a dream, ‘Miss Montmorency,’ I exclaimed, ‘is it, can it be possible that this is you?’

“‘Lord Beauclerk!’ she replied, ‘how, oh,

how is this?' and she put her hand upon her forehead in a state of apparent delirium.

" My attention was so entirely engrossed by what was passing, that I had been able to remark *nothing* of the third lady; but, attracted now by a loud shriek from her, I flew to the other side, and opened the door. The lady instantly jumped out, and, throwing her arms on my neck, exclaimed, in a convulsive transport, 'Oh, my brother! my brother! I have a brother!' Here her sobbing choked further utterance.

" So overpowered was I by what had occurred, that it was with the utmost difficulty I could convey my sister to the side of the road, and lay her down on the green sward. Leaving her in charge of the maid servant, I then returned to the exhausted and bleeding Mrs. Montmorency. I stanch'd as well as I could her wound, and soothed Ellenor with the assurance that it was not mortal. She was more lovely than I had ever seen her, and

soon recovered her composure. My sister, too, grew better.

“ In a period of time remarkably short, a surgeon was in attendance with a cart from the inn, and several servants to assist in doing what was necessary. Of the three brigands who were shot, two were quite dead ; the third was mortally wounded, but still able to articulate. They were all put into the cart. The carriage then proceeded slowly back to the auberge, I walking by the side of it ; the cart with the bodies followed ; three men rode the horses of the dismounted robbers ; while the doctor followed on his mule, crossing himself and repeating his Ave Maria, as he gazed at intervals on the whole length of the mournful procession. He had pronounced Mrs. Montmorency’s wound to be not dangerous : that was a great consolation. Ellenor was now quite composed,—that was another ; and my sister having recovered from the distressing violence of her first paroxysm, beamed looks

of love upon me which kindled a flame in my soul, so hallowed, so generous, so pure, and so compassionate, withal, that I wished in very deed I might then die. Every thought which intervened between the contemplation of her and of a brother's love, seemed tiresome, obtrusive; everything that took me for a moment from observation of the most beautiful countenance I had ever seen, and that the countenance of my sister, I felt to be a *gêne*. I forgot the disgrace of my own birth, but I felt poignant sorrow and humiliation when I considered hers. I *tried* to forget it, and I almost did forget it, as I gazed upon a perfection of face, form, sweetness, dignity, and benevolence, that a king might be proud to have had paralleled in his child.

“We reached the inn, where the horror depicted in the countenances of the terrified spectators convinced us anew of the tragical appearance we made. Every effort was exerted to accommodate us in the best man-

ner possible. The authorities of the village were soon assembled, and depositions of all that had occurred were taken. The dead bodies and the dying man were next examined, when, oh! inscrutable ways of that Providence which shapes our course, the body of the chief was identified as that of the murderer of my mother,—Vimeira. He had fallen by the hand of the *son* of his victim at the moment when he was attempting to carry off and ruin the *daughter*.

“This we learnt from the lips of the dying but unrepentant man, and we found it fully confirmed by the papers on his own person. These were sealed up by the authorities, and, with an account of the whole proceedings, were transmitted to the government. But a deep and solemn silence ensued. Vimeira was an influential member of the Inquisition, and no reproach was to fall upon that body, from the atrocities, however foul or blood-stained, of one of its own brother-hood.

“I shall not trouble the reader with an account of the mutual congratulations which passed during the few days which we tarried at the inn to await the recovery of Mrs. Montmorency and of the servant.

“In order to explain how we thus met, it is simply necessary to say that Ellenor’s mother was the Madame Steinfort, to whom the Abbess of Santa Rosa had confided the care of my sister. On hearing at Geneva the tragical story of my mother’s confession and death, and of the Marquis of Fancourt’s flight, Mrs. Montmorency deemed it proper to proceed to Italy, to learn there the certainty of particulars so painful, and to consider of what was to be done for the permanent safety and establishment of my sister.

“They were so far *en route* when I met them. Having explained to them my situation, and they having no particular object either in returning to England or establish-

ing themselves in Italy, we agreed, *nemine contradicente*, to retrace our steps and fix, for a season at least, our abode among the woods and wilds and alpine beauties of the simple Swiss.

“In a very short time, Ellenor, convinced that I was a reformed man, made me a completely happy one.

“In the calm of domestic bliss and enjoyment, with a mother whom I respect, a sister whom I love, and a wife whom I adore, I pass days of happiness unalloyed, and nights of tranquillity undisturbed, even by *dreams* of anything but peace.

“The passions of an unruly nature are subdued, the wretched pride of a haughty one is happily laid low. Instead of affected kindness, I have now real affection ; instead of fawning subserviency, cordial equality ; and in lieu of the embarrassment, hurry, confusion, madness, inseparable from extravagance, debauchery, and gaming, I have independent competence,

sober study and reflection, regularity, and a heart attuned to the best sympathies of our nature.

“ I love and am beloved by my domestic circle, and I do all the good I can to the little family of simple-hearted neighbours by whom we are surrounded.

“ I see that *time* is but as a speck on the ocean of eternity, and feel that the great object alone worth contending for here, is a never-failing interest in that hereafter, to which, however unconsciously, we are all hastening at so rapid a pace.”

CHAPTER XVII.

In which the reader has a peep at London merchants, and a view of the city, during a panic.

SOLOMON was not only struck, but interested, by the story of Lord Beauclerk, especially as Eliza had informed her correspondent, that the title having long been dropped it was that gentleman's intention to pay a short visit, with his family, to England, where now, after a lapse of twenty-five years, his affairs, his misfortunes, his story, and even his appearance must be so fading from the recollection of all who had known him, as to leave him little apprehension, in the retired sphere in which he intended to move, of being recognized.

The visit was rendered necessary, in consequence of a considerable fortune having been left to his mother-in-law, and of his having been appointed one of the executors under the will.

Meantime, Solomon's affairs prospered to admiration ; Messrs. Macmunny, Seesaw, and Co. in Glasgow, and Seesaw, Macmunny, and Co. in London, flourished beyond most of their compeers.

They had ships consigned to them from every quarter of the globe : there was not an article of traffic in which they were not interested ; for though they only designated themselves " general " merchants, they might with great propriety have been styled " universal " ones.

In spite of the extent of their business, Solomon managed with such tact and prudence, as, seconded by his reputation for wealth, soon raised the London house into high credit.

Men of war brought him gold and silver from Mexico and Peru ; ships came ballasted

to him with copper from Chili ; he had gold dust and ivory from Africa ; cotton, coffee, cocoa, sugar, and bark, from America ; he imported timber and hemp from the Baltic ; and every now and then he fitted out a whaler to look for spermaceti oil among the icebergs of the Northern Ocean, or on the scarcely rippled waters of the Pacific.

There was not a people in the world to whom he did not send out some of our varied manufactures —acting through his deputies, as the pioneer of luxury and civilization, in almost every country in which the British flag could penetrate.

The firm of Macmunny, Seesaw, and Co. could command unbounded thousands wherever mercantile men were to be found, and exchange had become a medium of civilized commerce.

There was no misgiving as to the extent, still less any doubt as to the security, of their transactions.

Their policies were eagerly subscribed at Lloyd's; their bills always taken at the best rate of exchange.

The foreign post-nights found the clerks in Bishopsgate-street at work till half-past ten or eleven o'clock; and the system, ardour, and alacrity with which Solomon went to work, all took a glow from the one object he had in view, that of making a fortune large enough to bribe Mrs. Wynne to yield up to him, with her consent, one whom he could not hope to marry without it, while the mother lived.

Certes, it is a goodly thing to be a rich and potent merchant, especially if you have on your side, in addition to wealth and its natural influence, address, education, and introduction to good society.

All these Solomon had, the latter especially; so that though he was ever to be found in the city of a morning, he had access in the evening to rank, wealth, fashion, and beauty; he had also the great felicity of entertaining at his own

house, though a bachelor, the belles as well as the beaux of his fashionable, fascinating, and not the less agreeable, because small, circle of acquaintance.

There was, however, a latent and sometimes too obvious pride in Solomon's character.

It did him no good with his friends, and still less with his enemies. It kept him aloof, in a great measure, from his city peers; because although so many of them had higher pretensions than himself, in the city phrase of the word, and many superior claims, from connexion, yet Solomon saw that the desire of increasing wealth was an element of city character, carried to so engrossing an extent, and sometimes characterized by such intensity of calculation, as to damp his congeniality with them, and to render his intercourse constrained. Of liberal merchants, he saw there were plenty; of generous men not many. And yet he *could* number a few within the sphere of his own ac-

quaintance ; although, like many more, they went the way of those, who, endeavouring to combine the absorbing pursuit of gain on the one hand, with a generous disposal of it on the other, generally linger in mediocrity, and die in embarrassment.

But truly, as Mr. Macmunny said, in his discourse upon commerce, when sailing down the Clyde, it is not the *merchant* alone that is chargeable with a general reluctance to part, on the mere score of generosity, with what he has gotten.

The homage offered by most men to Fortune, shows it to be a besetting passion of our nature to pay our adorations at the shrine of that captivating deity ; and as experience teaches us that it is easier to win her favours than to keep them, your prudent men, and especially your cautious merchants, are ever prone to hoard.

Of these the motto is,—“ Having got what you could, hold fast what you have gotten.”

Their practice is in such faithful accordance

with their precept, that the precept being invested with the dignity of a principle, the practice grows into a rooted habit, and becomes, at length, a second nature.

While Solomon was prospering in the way described in London, Mr. Macmunny was not less zealous, though not quite so successful, in his operations in Glasgow.

He had married his daughter to an extensive, and reputedly rich calico printer. This was a considerable load off his mind ; and he had married his eldest son (now a partner in the house) to Miss Leader ; which the old merchant thought quite a feather in his cap.

But Mr. Macmunny had, for all this, at times, his forebodings and anxieties.

Instead of diminishing his transactions, as, on occasion of his connexion with Solomon, it had been his intention to do, they had immeasurably expanded : his responsibilities were enormous ; and, large as the capital of the house was, there was sometimes a *pinch* felt in mak-

ing up the budget. The pressure was generally relieved by the issue of fresh bills, to be often renewed, upon Solomon; and even he began to feel serious as he considered the amount of them, and saw both himself and Mr. Macmunny a little hampered in discount operations, if there was anything like what is termed a "pressure" on the money market.

Both the old gentleman and the young, therefore, determined to contract their sphere of operation; "to draw in their horns," as Mr. Macmunny called it, and by all means to diminish the amount of their paper in circulation.

Very stringent letters were written to the houses abroad, commanding them to send home no more produce (except the returns for property shipped), and especially to draw no more bills.

These precautions were adopted in full conclave, and by unanimous consent, of the partners of the house, there being present, at the

cabinet council, Mr. Macmunny, Mr. Seesaw, Mr. Macmunny, junior, and Mr. Turnit, senior.

But though it is very easy to scatter property over the world, it is no more easy, by either peremptory orders, or pressing letters, to call it back again, at your own time and convenience, than it is to whistle back the bird which you have once let fly from your hand. The contingencies of winds and waves ; of overstocked markets, and long credits ; of produce bought at a high price, to be sold at a low one ; and above all, of foolish agents, or roguish ones ; of speculative partners, or self-willed ones, leave the merchant at home too often a prey to his foreign establishments.

And, be it remembered, that as regards the bills drawn upon him, there are *no* such contingencies. The little bit of paper that, representing thirty, forty, or fifty thousand pounds, has been wafted across the Atlantic, or brought from the banks of the Ganges, with as much confidence as if the silver and gold to be paid

for it were on board of the ship,—that little bit of magical, and oh! how fearful, sometimes, and ominous bit of paper,—*must* be provided for at maturity, whatever becomes of the property abroad, and at whatever sacrifice to be made at home.

Two, four, at most six months, elapse from the date of its acceptance to that of payment.

Let the acceptor tell whether lightning is more rapid in its course than the days which intervene, between acceptance and payment, if he be embarrassed, or at his wits' end, for money.

What days of struggle, peril, fear and agitation, are sometimes the three days called, by what strange misnomer I know not, "*days of grace.*" It has often appeared to me that they would be much better designated "*days of purgatory.*"

Then, for the alternative, if the bit of paper be *not* paid. A fearful train of evils ensues. Stoppage, discredit, bankruptcy, degradation, poverty, neglect, eventual imprisonment, per-

haps ; and, as a happy release from such complicated evils, a premature death from starvation, or one protracted by a pittance just sufficient to keep, in united misery, body and soul together.

Solomon, and Mr. Macmunny too, worked away manfully to avert the possibility of such a result : deeming it, at the same time, though aware that great losses must be sustained, of all things the least likely to occur.

For two years more did the colossal house, supported by those friends most interested in its success, resist the rude shocks and oscillations of a commercial crisis which then supervened.

The heavings and fluctuations of the money market they long withstood, as well as the repeated and disastrous sacrifices to which they had been obliged to submit of property, from want of remittances on the one hand, and on the other, from fresh drafts issued by one of the partners who became a fancier of mines.

He sunk shafts, drove adits, made drains,

advanced money to the gambling miners, dealt in mules, and eke in asses, for the carriage of ores that were not worth taking out of the matrix ;—he spread subordinate establishments all over the country in which he was ; he was pilfered by this agent, and balked by that ; till, to complete the catastrophe of his mismanagement, he loaded the house with bad debts ; came home to say that he had left the concern in a flourishing condition ; and he finally showed a balance sheet making out the concern abroad, which in three months afterwards was obliged to surrender all to its creditors, to be worth a mint of money.

This gentleman's name was Mr. Maladroit, and he was only one of a large class of persons who, by a certain plausibility and external deference to others, go about the world for ever blundering from bad to worse, yet ever preserving the reputation of being modest, honest, clever men ; and only unfortunate ones, because they have been badly connected.

You do not often hear them commended for any good action, but you will seldom hear them blamed for any bad one; they have such a marvellous and plausible knack, before the burthen of blame can be laid upon their shoulders, to shift it to those of another.

By such specious but contemptible chicanery did Mr. Maladroit make out Solomon to be the author of all the evils which were fast accumulating upon the devoted firm, of which, in London, he was the head.

But even this shock the house of Seasaw and Macmunny might have resisted; for, in order to meet their most pressing demands, and thus, if they should lose their property, make a last effort to save their credit, Solomon determined to draw the fifty thousand pounds, which he had in deposit, in his own name, and in the hands of one of the most wealthy individuals in the city, to whom he had lent it at interest.

The pressing demand in question was one

of the bits of paper, already described, for forty-five thousand pounds, which was fast running to maturity, and for which, neither in the bill case, nor at the bankers of Messrs. Seesaw, Macmunny and Co, was there anything like adequate provision. There was, indeed, none at all; for smaller drafts were falling daily due, and absorbing the slender means that could from day to day be collected for their payment.

Solomon, therefore, went to his friend to call up his fifty thousand pounds.

To the astonishment and dismay of everybody, his friend had that morning stopped payment. He involved in his ruin, by reducing to the same predicament with himself, ten or twelve of the houses most nearly connected with him. The fall of these again smashed forty or fifty of inferior note, all depending upon payments from their superiors, to make good their own at their bankers.

Scarcely had Solomon heard from his

friend's lips the fatal secret which revealed to him his own inevitable ruin, than crossing his forehead with his right hand, and extending to his friend the other,—he said, “ Well, well, it is over at last; and thank God for it! I now know the worst.”

So saying, he departed from the counting-house of a man ruined on a larger scale than himself; and as he passed along, he saw three large banking-houses beset by crowds (there was technically speaking a *run* upon them), till the clerks at length shut the shutters, closed the doors, and declared the bank to have stopped payment.

At the doors of other banking establishments, there were post-chaises, with four reeking horses from the country, waiting for gold; while the bank of England itself, beset by hundreds, was in hourly communication with the Mint, and with the government, urging the former to produce more coin, and preparing the latter to authorize a suspension of cash payments.

Solomon saw, on his return to Bishopsgate Street, that further efforts to weather, with his disabled means, the mercantile hurricane that was raging around him might not only involve the charge of madness, which was bad, but of dishonesty, which was worse.

He therefore called in to his private office the head clerk; told him in a firm but melancholy tone, that no further payments were to be made; and desired that any one wanting to see him might be shown into his room.

The news spread like the vapours of night over the counting-house, and darkened as well as saddened every countenance there: for Solomon was really esteemed by most, and loved by some of his servants.

In half an hour a bill was presented, but refused; and the amazed clerk, scarcely crediting his senses, rushed from the counter, in consternation, to inform the principals of the unexpected catastrophe.

In another hour the news was all over the city, and this failure, with its consequences, added many more to the already large list of bankruptcies.

Among other houses, the one which held Solomon's acceptance for forty-five thousand pounds, losing this prop, essential to its standing, fell in ruins upon several smaller establishments, which tottering to their fall before, were now crushed to earth by this further shock.

Solomon sat that day in a sort of stupefied quiescence, and bewildered amazement at his fate.

To add to the gloom of the scene, one of those dense winter fogs which so often overspread the city fell with all the horrors of premature night upon it, and obliged the members of every counting-house to take refuge from total darkness by the lighting of candles, or the admission of gas into their dreary abodes of business.

The sun, like a fiery orb, yet without either light or heat, looked through the mist in frowning sullenness upon the mercantile desolation, which made the stoutest hearts in London quake.

Solomon was not interrupted in his own room, during the day, except by two or three friends, who hastily came in to certify themselves of the state of the case, and as hastily retired to attend to their own urgent affairs.

He heard, it is true, continual rings of the counting-house bell, followed by steps,—every one of them now ominous to him;—but two minutes sufficed to settle the business of the applicant.

It was for adjustment of an account, or payment of a bill; and the short answer in both cases was, “The house has stopped payment.”

“Do you desire to see Mr. Seesaw?” was the question then put. “No,” was the still more laconic reply; and out the messenger

marched, leaving the echo of his footsteps and the bell to reverberate through the now hushed apartments of business.

Solomon waited within, till the latest business hour; and then calling his head clerk, told him to make up a short statement of the house's affairs by the morrow, especially of the liabilities and assets.

He then walked through the counting-house, amid the silence and sorrow of his clerks, and getting into his carriage, (which was so soon to be abandoned,) desired to be driven to Langham Place.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Solomon becomes a bankrupt.

As from the city to the west end, Solomon wended his way through the dense masses of vehicles which obstructed it, in Cheapside, Cornhill, and the Strand, many stoppages afforded him leisure for thought, even amid the clatter, brawling, and confusion, which are such terrible characteristics of those thoroughfares.

There is not, that I know of, any such nursery for melancholy, when the heart is pre-disposed to sadness, as the bustling streets of London.

The desert, the woods, the wilds, even the



spots allotted for mansions to the dead, have no such power of deepening woe as the crowded haunts of men in this great metropolis.

The forlorn spirit there wanders about under rude, abrupt, and overwhelming evidence of its being no component part of the eager, bustling society, of which self is the one single and engrossing ingredient.

If you *walk*, you are shouldered by this man, trodden upon by that, pushed aside by one, or run foul of by another (sometimes a quaker, and sometimes a Jew), so intent upon their arithmetical calculations as to forget, even in Cheapside, that there is any body in the street but themselves.

If you *ride*, hackney carriages and cabmen, four in-hand coaches from the country, rude carts, clumsy waggons, droves of cattle for Smithfield, a van from Newgate, a huge tottering pile drawn by one horse, and overlaid with advertisements, a smart, but impatient, gentleman, in his cab, a jingling post-chaise with

reeking horses, a baker's cart, and vehicles drawn by two panting dogs, to say nothing of mobs, locking of wheels, omnibus poles, and deafening cads,—all these not only obstruct your way, but, in such a case as Solomon's, they all tend to remind you that you are no longer one of the busy community around,—that you have lost your position in the world, and even your “local habitation and your name.”

Ah me! the streets of London under these circumstances are very sad.

To Solomon they offered not the elements of one congenial thought or feeling.

As regarded the future, all was gloom; in reference to the past, all regret.

A large fortune gratuitously bestowed had been scattered to the winds; and what was worse, the object, to win which the ample patrimony had been risked, seemed to be now irretrievably lost.

Then came to be considered, by Solomon, the discredit and degradation of bankruptcy.

"My coachman and other servants," he said, "I must dismiss,—nay, desire to dismiss to-morrow.

"But *they* lose no rank in society, on this account;—no stigma attaches to their name;—they have not been the cause of ruin to others;—they do not lose caste;—they cease not to be active and respectable, though humble members of the community.

"I must give them a character, for probity and propriety of conduct, which many of my irritated creditors would withhold from me.

"I must submit to scrutiny and investigation; to open rebuke, or to secret taunt; from all of which, they who have been heretofore my dependants, who are now my superiors, are exempt.

"I am at the mercy of every man to whom I owe a thousand pounds;—my servants owe no man anything, and are therefore free."

In this strain did Solomon soliloquize till he came to Langham Place; and there, the sad countenance of the footman, as he opened

the carriage-door, carried conviction to the ruined merchant's heart that his story was already known to all the servants in the house, though not one of those at home had yet dreamt of the possibility of the tragic event's ever occurring.

Solomon, absorbed by his own thoughts, walked up stairs, and walked down again, when his solitary dinner was announced.

He touched it not.—Grief is a terrible antidote to appetite.

But he drank a bottle of claret; and he then summoned resolution to call up to the drawing-room his dismayed household establishment.

Solomon lived essentially on the footing of a friend with his servants; and they were, one and all, therefore, *his* friends.

He looked upon each of them as a relic left by the old gentleman, to be at once cherished and respected; they looked upon him as a kind-hearted master. They served him with

a zeal and an affection, therefore, which neither money can buy, nor adversity abate.

By the time this interview took place, they had heard from the coachman and footman of the sad event which had occurred.

The women all entered with their aprons at their eyes; the men with a wofully downcast mein.

Solomon desired them all to sit down.

He then shortly opened up to them the true state of his circumstances; told them that they must depart on the morrow, with their arrears paid up, and a month's wages in advance, and that they were no longer to consider themselves as his servants.

He kindly explained to them how entirely his poverty and not his will consented to such a separation.

"Two of you, alone," he continued, "can I retain for a few weeks longer; and these are the housekeeper and the butler;—the one to look after the mansion, its paintings and fur-

niture ; the other to take care of the plate and cellar, till they are made over, as the property of my creditors, to whom they now legitimately belong. In another week, I myself shall go to lodgings."

The servants simultaneously declared their resolution to stop.

Solomon, kindly, but peremptorily showed them the impossibility of this.

Down stairs they walked, every one of them, for the first time sad since they had entered his service.

But not a quarter of an hour had elapsed, when, as the ruined merchant was contemplating the beauty and repose of a Claude Lorraine, the butler tapped gently at the door.

"Come in," said his master.

In walked the male head of the establishment, the butler, followed by the female head, the housekeeper.

"Sit down," said Solomon to both ; "what is it you want?"

Both refused to sit down.

Then spoke the butler thus :—

“ All we have, we have had from you ; and both we and our fellow servants, by whom we are deputed, desire that you will take back of that which you freely gave *whatever* you want.”

“ That,” said Solomon, “ is out of the question. What you have, you do *not* owe to me. You owe it to the old gentleman, your late master. I was merely the minister of his bounty ; which, had he distributed himself, I have no doubt, he would have done with a more liberal hand.”

Not another word would the bankrupt allow to be said on the subject ; and for the first time in their lives, the two faithful domestics were ushered out of the room with a feeling that their master was “ very unkind.”

Next morning Solomon went to the city ; but not in his carriage. He thought the comfort, and still more the state of that conveyance in-


compatible with his present prostrate position. He took a hackney-coach ; and drawing the sashes quite close, consoled himself by the reflection that for half an hour, at least, he would be unobserved, and unquestioned.

What need of much more on this doleful subject ?

Mr. Macmunny was summoned to town. On a short investigation of the affairs of the copartnery, it was seen that bankruptcy was inevitable.

The usual humiliating formalities were gone through. Solomon was examined by the commissioners ; many severe remarks were made, many scrutinizing questions put, and many scorching innuendos uttered by those of the creditors who considered themselves most aggrieved.

Then the assignees demanded Solomon's watch and money. The watch was worth thirty guineas ; the money in his pocket amounted to five.



Both were returned to him.

The ceremony enacted of their delivery is one of mere form ; but one of the most humiliating that can well be conceived.

The merchant who has lived in munificent affluence, and looked up to by most of those who in his altered circumstances scowl upon him with looks of reproach, or accusation, is placed as a bankrupt at their mercy for that certificate, which alone can save him from starvation and a gaol.

All this, however, Solomon went through, with as much philosophy as the nature of the case admitted ; and in forty days from the time of the fiat of bankruptcy's going forth, bereft of all, he sought shelter for his diminished head in the second floor of a grocer's shop.

CHAPTER XIX.

In which will be found two Letters,—an account of Solomon's transition state,—and an introduction to Mr. Ironside.

OF the disastrous issue of Solomon's career not a word had yet been communicated either to Mrs. Wynne or to Eliza.

But he considered himself now bound by every principle of honour to relinquish his pretensions to the hand of the latter, and to release her from all engagements under which she had come to him.

With heavy heart, but purpose fixed, he sat down in his now lonely retreat to pen that letter, which the agitation and turmoil of the last two months, together with the unwilling consent we ever give to do that

quickly, which we must do reluctantly, had prevented his hitherto writing.

“My dear Eliza,

“While I had a fortune to offer adequate to your own, or hoped to make one adequate to your mother's more ambitious aspirations, I saw, that so long as you should remain true to your first love, there was no human time or chance, but that of death, which could prevent our union.

“Grievous to me was the postponement of it. Yet, as in the case of Jacob for Rachel ‘I have served for you seven years,’ (aye more), and they have seemed to me but a few days, for the love I have had to you.

“But my service has been in vain. Instead of making a second fortune, I have lost the first: in one word, I am a bankrupt.

“It is my imperative duty, therefore, to relinquish all pretensions to your hand; and, under what feelings you may conceive, I now do so.

“But stop. Do not for a moment suppose that I can think it possible you should ever be actuated by sordid feelings.

“You have loved me when I was as poor as I am now, nor have I a doubt that, if I pleaded the irrevocable and reciprocal declarations which have passed in our case, they would be confirmed and acted upon at once with undiminished affection.

“So far, however, am I from pleading them, that I hold them, as far as you are concerned, to be void; and I return the few youthful notes you wrote to me at Llangollen, which, though I know to be a precaution unnecessary in your estimate, will be quite essential toward satisfying your mother of the sincerity of my procedure.

“I do not give you my address, because that might be naturally taken as a hint that I should not be unwilling again to hear from you. But I have never liked half-measures in anything; and in cases like this,

where all that is honourable on my part, and all that may be connected with future happiness and prosperity on yours, are at stake, I cannot for an instant hesitate to make the measure, as far as it depends on me, final and decisive.

“Farewell, my dear Eliza; and believe me that, while I relinquish, as I best may, all hope that you can ever be mine, until death do us part, I must be for ever yours, in all sincerity and affection,

“SOLOMON SEESAW.”

Determined to conclude a business at once so painful and so urgent, Solomon immediately wrote to Mrs. Wynne as follows :—

“Dear Madam,

“I have, for the first time, broken my compact with respect to the correspondence that it was agreed should pass between your family and myself. I have written to Eliza direct. But I send the letter for her open

to you ; and have no doubt the subject of it will be so welcomely received, as fully to justify, in your eyes, the violation in this sole instance of my promise.

“ You have severed two persons who might have been prosperously, and you know well would have been happily united many years ago.

“ I forgive you, and only hope, for another’s sake as well as yours, that you may have no such retributive punishment as that of bewailing the unhappiness of her whom you so sincerely, though, permit me to say, so mistakingly, love.

“ I have the honour to be,

“ Dear Madam,

“ Your most obedient servant,

“ SOLOMON SEESAW.”

Having made up, and sent off, this packet for Italy, Solomon felt for the moment relieved of one heart’s load ; but he was presently oppressed by another.

He had done what was honourable ; and that was pleasing : but he had made a sacrifice of all that was dear to him ; and that was very sad.

A few months sufficed, not to dissipate Solomon's affection for Eliza, but to dispel the gloom which had been brooding over his worldly projects, and especially the final darkness in which they had been enveloped.

Being naturally of a buoyant disposition and sanguine temperament, he soon rallied, and became as cheerful with a few pounds in his pocket as ever he had been with a plum at his banker's.

He liked money as well as other men, no doubt ; but it was only for the good things it could procure, and the good things it sometimes enabled him to do.

He had nothing in him of the miser, as must be evident from his having been accused by many of his friends, and by all his enemies, of being too much of the prodigal.

Shorn now of his beams, he was content to sit down in a humble place to humble fare ; and he thought little of the loss of Langham Place, or of made dishes and French wines.

If you leave a man to reform himself in his eating, drinking, and other extravagance, while yet you leave him the means of indulging in them ; and if, after having done this, you expect to see a reformed subject, of all expectations I know none more vain.

But take from him what he has : say to him, sit down here, my friend, and content yourself with the fare that altered circumstances prescribe ; show him that there is no alternative ; and he whose palate thought everything insipid in the way of eating but curry, venison, turtle-soup, and turbot,—everything in the way of drinking, but claret, champagne, and Burgundy, will, at the end of a month, sit down with great contentment to a mutton-chop, half a pint of sherry, and a glass of ale.

But yet, in order to obtain even this cheer,

and a lodging at thirty guineas a-year, means were necessary ; and they came in upon Solomon in a way to verify the truth of the old Spanish proverb, that " Better off is the rich poor man, than the poor rich one.*"

Bitter as are many of the enemies made by every bankruptcy, yet there generally remain some of the better few (especially those who have not much suffered) to bear evidence of the truth of another proverb, that " A friend in need is a friend indeed."

Of such there remained to Solomon a good many ; who, some in one way, some in another, testified either their gratitude for past benefits conferred, or their undiminished sense of the value they attached to his friendship.

So he received a pipe of wine from this friend, a token of regard, in the form of a present, from another. One person insisted upon making a loan, for some favour formerly

* *M s vale ser Rico pobre, que pobre Rico.*

granted; another on paying what he considered but a poor remuneration for substantial and hitherto unrequited services performed.

One instance, which, if it were not chiefly indicative of conscientious scrupulosity, might be recorded as one of almost romantic integrity, is worthy of record.

One morning as Solomon was sitting at his solitary breakfast, in the two-pair-of-stairs room, there walked in upon him an old friend, not a merchant, but a captain in the navy.

Solomon was delighted to see him; and they shook hands most cordially.

After a good deal of conversation, the post-captain drew from his pocket a cheque for a hundred guineas, and addressed Solomon thus:—

“Four years ago you presented me with what you said was the produce of shares which you had allotted to me in a mining company,

and which, being sold, produced this profit of a hundred guineas to me.

“ You know the many arguments I urged against receiving such a sum, in such a way, even though you told me (deeming me to have more charitable propensities than my means would allow me to gratify) to bestow it in piously alleviating the distresses of others.

“ My conscience objected to the gift, even on these terms ; but it was left in doubt, as to whether, seeing you in such affluent circumstances, it was not my duty to take it for the poor.

“ Unable to determine the question myself, I consulted my friend and relative, the Bishop of —.

“ He advised me not to decline the receipt of the money ; but by no means to apply it to the purposes suggested.

“ ‘ The fortunes of merchants are precarious,’ he added ; ‘ and perhaps you may find, a few years hence, your friend himself more in need of the bounty he would now bestow through

you, than most of those to whom you could give it.

“ ‘Keep it ; by all means, keep it, at any rate, for a year or two, till you see what happens.’

“ I have kept it *four* years,” continued the pious post-captain ; “ and I *have* seen (whether with sorrow I cannot well say)—but I have seen happen that which the excellent prelate almost predicted.

“ Here is the sum you gave me ; I am sorry in one sense,—glad in another, to return it : sorry, because I know how much you must feel your present transition ; but glad, as hoping that it may induce you, instead of trusting to those riches which make wings unto themselves, and flee away, to look to that pearl of great price, for which, when a man findeth it, he goeth and selleth all he hath.”

Here the oration of Solomon’s friend ended ; here in vain Solomon endeavoured to refuse the returned money ; and here, though this

friend and Solomon have been irrevocably separated, I record, as a faithful biographer, an anecdote which does an honour to the post-captain, not one whit impaired by the differences of opinion which have since thrown them widely asunder.

From such sources as those glanced at, Solomon derived means which might have enabled him to live in a different way from that in which he did; but seeing that a revenue thus arising could not be permanent, and was anything but desirable or independent, he preferred the humble mode of life which he had adopted, until he could better his estate. So far from being *poor*, on his economical system, he actually got again an account (to be sure it was not a very large one) at his banker's.

In the same lodgings with Solomon, but elevated one floor above him, there was living a middle-aged gentleman, with a young, genteel-looking, and pretty wife.

They were evidently in decayed circumstances, with as evidently, however, many traces conspicuous about them, tending to show that they had seen better days.

Their unobtrusive and subdued demeanour, their easy mien and self-possession, the quiet assiduity with which the lady attended to her husband's wants, and the kindness and affection with which he seemed to recognise and appreciate her services, were all apparent to Solomon, though he had never had an interview with either. But it is no more possible, when, in a small lodging with a narrow staircase, there is, one floor above you, a brawling couple, to avoid being aware of the matrimonial discord, than it is when a meek and quiet pair pass through scenes of even poverty and privation, with resignation to console, with patience to subdue, with hope to cheer, and, above all, with love to bless them.

This is especially the case when circumstances force upon the weaker vessel the double office of servant and of wife.

Solomon had now been six months in his apartments, and saw, or thought he saw, all this exemplified in his fellow-lodgers.

But he was not anxious, in his present position, to make new acquaintance; nor did he suppose the party up-stairs was; for, when they passed each other on the stairs, it was only with a polite and distant bow, and a sometimes half-whispered "Good morning, Sir."

Solomon knew nothing of them beyond what he saw, except that the servant had told him, in reply to the only question he had ever put regarding his fellow-lodgers, "That the gentleman's name was Mr. Ironside."

The housemaid, glad of the first faint pretext which Solomon had given her to gossip, was going on to say—"Ah! Mr. Seesaw, if you knew all;" but Mr. Seesaw stopped her peremptorily short, saying that he would not hear a word from her concerning his fellow-lodger.

Solomon had a thorough contempt for that prying, inquisitive disposition which in many

masters, and especially in many mistresses, converts servants first into spies, and then makes them vehicles of scandal and defamation.

One night Mr. and Mrs. Ironside came home at an hour, for them, unusually late. They were generally in their room (for, alas ! they had but one) before eight ; it was now twelve.

Solomon, who was sitting over his book, and sipping a glass of wine-and-water, presently heard the gentlest possible tap at his room-door.

He opened it immediately ; and Mr. Ironside, with many apologies, informed him that his fire had gone out, and that he would feel much obliged for a light.

Solomon asked him kindly to walk in ; which he did ; but declined a glass of wine-and-water, still more kindly tendered.

Two minutes passed in conversation ; and then Mr. Ironside retired, bowing a good deal more cordially than when he first entered.

The ice was thus broken. Solomon sent up his card next day, with a note to the effect that he should be happy to have the pleasure of Mr. Ironside's acquaintance.

The second-floor lodger preferred this mode of communication to that of calling on the third floor one, lest, the room being only one, and that divided with a lady, too, the domestic arrangements might not admit, with comfort to the occupants, of a visit from a stranger.

Mr. Ironside not only consented to become the acquaintance of Solomon; but in less than three months they became intimate friends.

When hearts are in the right place, sentiments congenial, education pretty equal, and nothing sordid or disguised on either side, it does not require an age to make a friendship.

Solomon found Mr. Ironside clever, intelligent, of liberal mind and education, acute, logical, eloquent. He had a spirit, so far from being naturally dull, reserved, or cast down by adversity, that it was at once cheerful,

witty, equable, and agreeable. He earned a scanty subsistence by writing for the periodicals, and was aided in his efforts to fend off, as sailors say, starvation, by the ingenuity and industry of his wife.

She painted in oils very beautifully; and sold, alas! for very small sums, the productions of her pencil.

Solomon, poor as he was, had it often in his power to eke out what was wanting to keep the small establishment of Mr. Ironside in frugal neatness, and with a few increased comforts.

The two friends (for they were really such) became as hand and glove.

Solomon asked Mr. Ironside, one day, to give him some of the particulars of his history. As a prelude to this request, Solomon gave an undisguised account of his own short, but eventful career.

Mr. Ironside replied, that his history was, properly speaking, not so much his own as that of a man who, from affluence, had brought

him to his present low estate: from the possession of every luxury to the endurance of every privation.

"But these things," added Mr. Ironside, "I have for some time been accustomed to smile at; and while I will, with great pleasure, give you the history of the gentleman referred to, as an essential preliminary to the *very* little I have to give you of my own, I hope you will allow me to do it in our usual light way of relating to each other events, which many suppose ought only to be told with a melancholy face, and shrouded in imagery dolefully proportionate to the sadness of the catastrophe."

"I hate lugubrious tales," said Solomon, "especially if long continued, on any subject. We are both agreed that it is not worth while to weep over the loss of fortune, adding thereby positive woe to irretrievable disaster.

"Whenever I see a man much downcast on the score of those riches having escaped him

which proverbially 'make unto themselves wings, and flee away,' I think him not much more reasonable than the crying boy, whose bird has escaped from his hand, and cannot be recalled.

"Therefore, tell your story in your own pleaaant way."

A mutton-chop was prepared, a bottle of wine drawn, and, dinner being despatched, Solomon and his friend drew the table toward the fire, placed their feet on the fender; and Mr. Ironside proceeded to relate what will be found in the next chapter.

END OF VOL. II.



